

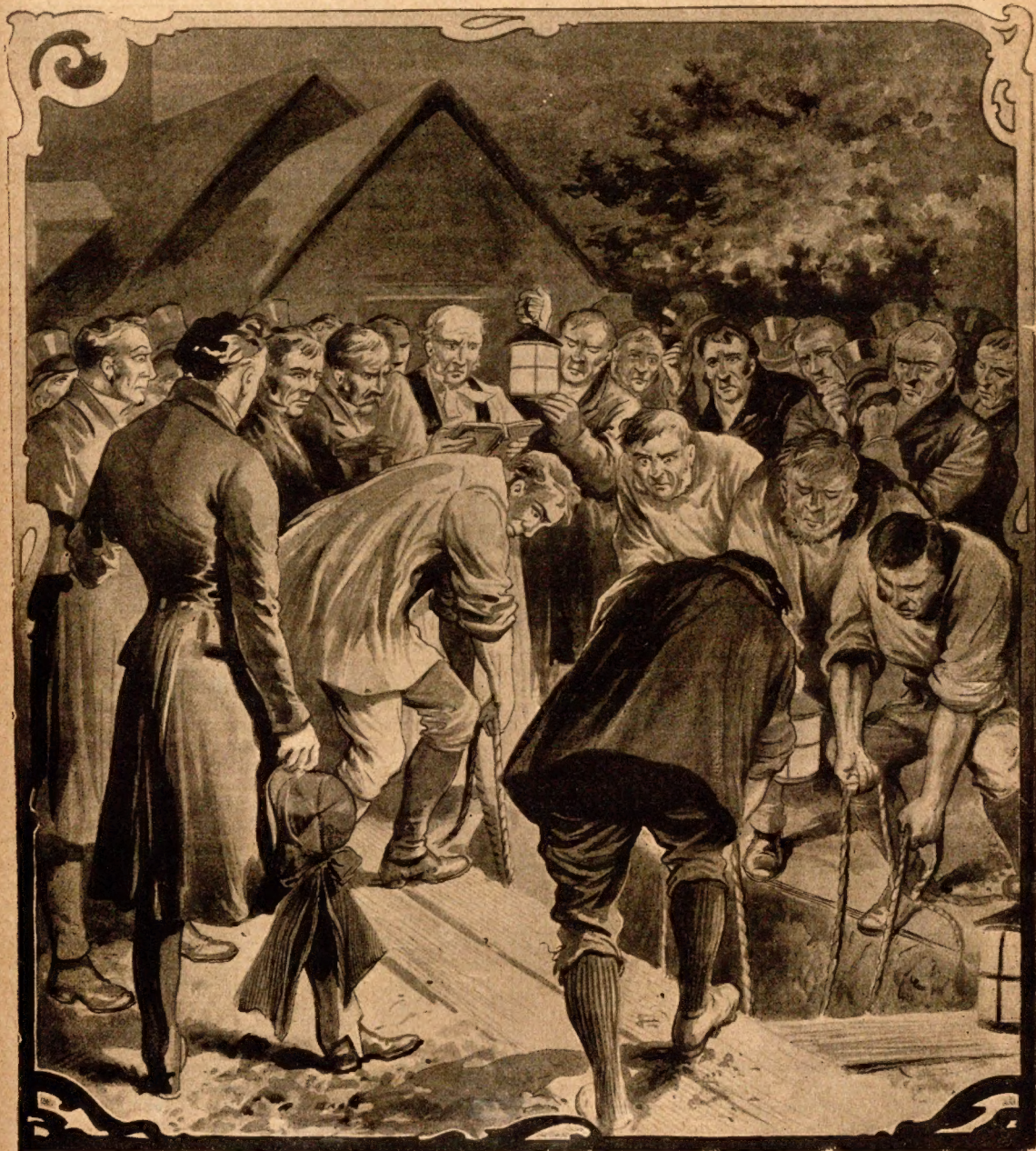
POLICE · BUDGET · EDITION

EDITED BY HAROLD FURNISS

FAMOUS CRIMES

PAST AND PRESENT

CASH POISON ONE PENNY



THE BURIAL OF MR. WEARE.



The Brutal Murder of Mr. Weare in 1823 by Thurtell, Hunt, and Probert: One of the Causes-Celebres of the Last Century.

"Murder is the Usurpation of the Power of God. To take the life of a man—or woman—is to wilfully destroy His divine handiwork."

—THIBAULT, "The Moods of Man."

PART II.



UCH indignation and surprise were expressed universally when facts transpired which seemed to show that, although the villagers round about Gill's Hill Lane were practically certain that a great crime had been committed in the district, they took no steps of any kind to place their suspicions before the proper authorities. A pistol shot and groans had been heard, murderous weapons had been found in the hedge, and pools of blood in the lane; yet no representations were made to those whose duty it would have been to properly investigate these circumstances of suspicion.

The news that a mysterious murder had been committed in the neighbourhood of Elstree reached the ears of a Mr. Rexworthy, the proprietor of some billiard-rooms in the West End, to whom Weare was particularly well known. This man remembered that the latter had told him that he had been invited to that part of the country for a few days' sport, and that he had mentioned that a friend of Thurtell was to be his host on the occasion. Neither seeing nor hearing anything further of Weare and knowing something of Thurtell's desperate character—for that worthy and Hunt were in the habit of talking of murder with the utmost sang-froid and of "ripping people up" generally—Rexworthy arrived at the conclusion that his friend had been lured to Hertfordshire and barbarously murdered.

The arrests were made on October 29, a Wednesday. On that morning an officer of police arrived and took Thurtell and Hunt into custody on suspicion. They were captured at the Coach and Horses in Conduit Street by Ruthven, a very well-known Bow Street officer, and a pistol was found on the person of Thurtell, who, however, made no attempt at resistance. The pistol was the fellow to that found in the lane after the murder. The waistcoat and coat he was wearing were bloodstained, and they were removed from him, while most of the portable property stolen from Weare was found at Hunt's lodgings, which were immediately searched by the police. A piece of cord was found there which corresponded exactly with that with which the legs of the deceased, as was afterwards discovered, were tied together.

Thurtell and Hunt were immediately conveyed to Elstree, and the latter, believing that the moment had arrived to throw over his companions and preserve his own life, at once offered to relate all he knew of the awful event. The confession was quite voluntary, and no promises of any kind were made to the prisoner. On the Thursday afternoon he was conducted before the magistrates and made a very lengthy statement which was not concluded

till past nine o'clock the following morning, the investigation having continued without intermission throughout the night. Hunt at length brought his revelation to an end by offering to conduct the proper persons to the spot "where the body of Mr. Weare would be found." The authorities immediately availed themselves of this proposal, and requested Mr. Noel, the solicitor representing Weare's relatives, Ruthven, and several officers to attend the magistrate to the pond in which the corpse was concealed. Hunt went in a post-chaise, accompanied by Ruthven, and on arriving near the sheet of water the prisoner put his hand out of the vehicle and said, "That is the place." A drag was provided by Mr. Field, the landlord of the Artichoke public-house at Elstree, and one of the men threw it into the pond, and presently withdrew it without bringing anything of importance to land. Hunt put his head out of the chaise window and called out, "It is not there, but farther that way," pointing to one side of the stream. The drag was again immersed, and the body of a man, enveloped in a new sack, was drawn out, placed on a ladder, and carried to the Artichoke public-house. The corpse, up to the abdomen, was hidden by the sack, into which it had been thrust head foremost; the feet were tied together with a piece of cord, to which was appended a pocket-handkerchief filled with flint stones, weighing about thirty pounds. Another cord had been tied over the sack, round the waist of the deceased, to which was affixed a very large flint stone, and in the end of the sack a great number of stones had been placed before the body was put into it. The magistrates directed that the body should not be examined till the jury were impanelled.

Hunt was driven back to Elstree. On the way he addressed himself to Mr. Field, saying, "I and Probert were sitting under the trees in front of the Artichoke for an hour, on the night of the murder, drinking. You know this?" Mr. Field replied in the affirmative, and Hunt continued, "Probert wanted me to sing, but I was so very drunk that I could not." He was then conveyed to St. Albans Gaol, and the coroner issued orders for a jury to assemble on the following morning.

The news of the discovery of the body created extraordinary sensation. A brother of Mr. Weare was summoned from London, and instructions issued for the arrest of Probert and Thomas Thurtell, of whom the latter was speedily discharged from custody. John Thurtell continued to take matters very calmly, even when informed of Hunt's disclosures and the recovery of the body; but he denounced the latter as well as Probert in the most scathing fashion, and declared that Hunt's tale was untrue—as, indeed, it was in many essential particulars.

On Friday morning, October 31, at eleven o'clock, Benj. Rooke, Esq. (coroner), R. Clutterbuck, J. F. Mason, T. Hayworth, Esqs. (magistrates), together with a great number of gentlemen living in the vicinity, assembled at the Artichoke Inn, at Elstree. Between eleven and twelve o'clock, Hunt, Probert, and T. Thurtell arrived at the inn in different postchaises, accompanied by police-officers. John Thurtell, facile princeps in this tale of crime, was not brought up on this occasion. Neither Hunt nor Probert appeared to feel his position very acutely, and the first-named ruffian showed a callous indifference in respect to the deed which excited much comment and a severe reprimand later on from the coroner. The jury were sworn, and then Mr. Rexworthy, proprietor of the Billiard-rooms, Spring Gardens, was called. He identified the body. He said that Mr. Weare took leave of him on Friday morning, October 24, and that the latter had on him at the time, to the knowledge of the witness, a sum of twenty-four pounds, P. Smith deposed to having heard the report of a pistol in Gill's Hill Lane on the night of the murder, and added that, prior to that incident, he heard a chaise coming in the direction of Radlet from High Cross. James Freeman's evidence was interesting and important, as proving the presence of Weare in the gig with Thurtell just before the outrage. He declared that he was going on the evening of Friday across a field leading into Gill's Hill Lane, by Probert's house, about eight o'clock, and saw two gentlemen in a gig; one of them alighted. Witness said to the gentlemen, "You have driven your horse very fast; it is very much out of wind." They did not reply to this rather gratuitous remark; but the witness was not disconcerted, and went on to say, "This is a very dark lane to go down in the evening." Neither of the occupants of the gig seemed inclined to enter into conversation with this villager, and that loquacious individual walked on. One man, he said, had a light great coat on, buttoned with a loop, and both wore black hats. There were no lights to the gig; but it was a very clear and star-lit evening, and he was positive that he could recognise either of the strangers if he ever saw them again. The wife of this witness also spoke to meeting two gentlemen in a chaise, on the night of the murder, travelling along Gill's Hill Lane.

John Hetherington, a labourer, sworn: Was at work in Gill's Hill Lane about six o'clock on Saturday morning, and saw two men walking up the lane. One had a white and the other a black hat on, and the former was much taller than the other. They "grabbed" in the hedge, and the witness asked them if they had lost anything; whereupon one replied, "I was thrown out of my chaise here last night." Witness was sure he should know the tall man again if he were to see him. At this stage the witness was taken into the rooms where Probert, Thomas Thurtell, Hunt, and some other persons were; but he was unable to identify the "tall man in a white hat," who, of course, was John Thurtell. On his return, the witness described how he had himself searched the lane after the gentlemen had gone away, thinking that they might have dropped some money out of their pockets when upset from the gig, and he found a knife, which was covered with blood. A little later he found a pistol encrusted with blood, and gave it to Mr. Nicholls, his employer. That person drove down to the spot in his cart, and was present when the witness found a great pool of blood beneath some dried leaves. Mr. Nicholls remarked to him, "I am afraid something very bad has been done here." About eleven o'clock that night, the witness saw the same two gentlemen come down Gill's Hill Lane in a chaise, both being neatly dressed at that time, and wearing black hats. One of them—it was John Thurtell—asked him how he did. A man came down the lane with a large dog just after. He had no doubt it was Probert.

Mr. Nicholls, a farmer, corroborated the greater portion of the testimony, and stated that though he received the pistol on the 25th, he did not give it up to the magistrates till Tuesday, the 29th. He was in company with Probert

on the intervening Sunday at his house, on private business, and said to the latter, "What manoeuvres were you at last Friday evening?" Probert replied, "What do you mean? I know nothing of it." Witness said, "I suspect someone at your house fired a pistol in Gill's Hill Lane on Friday night"; and Probert inquired anxiously, "What time was it fired?" Witness said "Eight o'clock." Probert went on to say that it was not him or anyone at his house, as he did not return from town till later than that. The witness said that he had not done wilful wrong in failing to communicate these facts earlier to Mr. Mason, the magistrate, for he thought that as there was a good deal of drinking going on at Probert's some of them were going to London, and that someone belonging to the family had concealed himself in the hedge, and fired to alarm his companions as they passed. This not too lucid explanation of the witness's motives was accepted by the coroner, who exonerated him from any wilful blame in



They were captured at the "Coach and Horses."

the matter. Nicholls added that Probert had made some arrangement for having his pond filled up, and said jokingly, in reference to this, "It shall be dragged first, and you will find some big fish in it."

Susan Woodroffe, servant to Probert, was the next witness. She stated that her master came home on Friday, about nine o'clock at night, with two other persons—viz., Hunt and John Thurtell, both of whom had white hats on when they arrived. Probert gave the witness some pork chops to cook, and told her not to prepare them till he came back; and he then went out with Hunt and Thurtell, carrying a lantern and a candle. They left the house about ten o'clock, and returned about eleven; and witness served up the supper. The next morning Hunt and John Thurtell left the house about six o'clock, and Probert followed them with his dog. Mrs. Probert and her sister, Miss Noyes, were at the cottage on the Sunday, and also the two Thurtells, and on the Monday morning Thomas Thurtell, and James, a lad in Probert's employ, went away to London in a chaise. On Monday evening, the Thurtells and Hunt came to Probert's again, and left soon afterwards, Mrs. Probert opening the gates for them. Thomas Thurtell's children resided with Probert at the cottage.

James Haddis, aged thirteen, was sworn. He said that he had lived with Probert for seven months, and looked after his horse and gig. "Last Friday," said the witness, "John Thurtell came to my master's house in a carriage alone. He had a great coat on of a light colour. His outside clothes did not appear to be dirty. In half an hour Probert came in with another man." Thomas Abel Ward, of Watford, surgeon, stated that he was present at the examination of the body of the deceased person. The immediate cause of death was a wound on the anterior angle of the parietal bone, given by some instrument which might easily be the barrel of a pistol. Part of the skull was beat into the brains. There was another wound under the protuberance of the right cheek-bone, which had the appearance of a common gun or pistol-shot wound, and the ball had been repelled by the cheek-bone. The deceased had died from the effects of blows on the skull and the twisting of the weapon into the brain. There was

spoke of it to a living soul. The officer created an unbounded sensation by declaring that Probert had said that John Thurtell had picked out no less than seventeen persons of wealth and substance whom he intended to rob and murder. The evidence was then read over to the different witnesses, and most of them were bound over to appear at the next Hertford Assizes. The coroner adjourned the inquiry to the following day.

The next day at twelve o'clock the coroner and jury re-assembled, and the prisoners, who had been confined during the preceding night in St. Albans Gaol, arrived in three chaises, attended by the local police. A considerable crowd assembled outside the Artichoke and hooted the prisoners with right good will. They were placed in separate rooms and relieved of their irons. Soon after the magistrates had taken their seats Mr. Noel, the solicitor, entered the room, and said that Thomas Thurtell had expressed a wish before the examination proceeded to have



RECOVERING THE BODY OF MR. WEARE.

also a sharp wound on each side of the throat, and the one on the left side was sufficient to cause death.

Ruthven, of the Bow Street Force, next related how he had arrested the prisoners, and then occurred a somewhat dramatic incident.

Ruthven: "Mr. Coroner, I am requested by Probert to say that he wishes to make some communication to you; he says that he 'will not die with lies in his mouth.'"

The Coroner: "If he has anything to say I can have no objection to hear him; but he must be warned that he speaks at his own peril, without any promise or request on the part of the magistrates."

Thomas Bate, a boy in the employ of Mr. James Wardell, owner of Gill's Hill Cottage, deposed that he was cleaning out Probert's stable and under a dung heap found a torn and blood-stained shirt, and a sack tied in a bundle. The shirt found in John Thurtell's room by Ruthven was found to be of the same make and marked with the deceased's initials. Ruthven now came forward to inform the coroner that Probert had been before the magistrates and had made an important statement, in which he said that his was not the hand which killed Weare and that after the deed was perpetrated Thurtell threatened to kill him if he

some communication with him and the coroner. To this the magistrates said they had no objection if the prisoner wished it.

The new sack in which the body was found was then produced and laid on the table. It was slit from top to bottom and at the end in which the head had rested was a large stain of blood. A plan of Probert's cottage and grounds was then produced, which gave a complete key to the various circumstances related by the witnesses. The inquiry then proceeded, and Mr. Charles Lewin and Mr. George Jones proved the finding of the corpse in the pond in the manner described. After the examination of these witnesses some conversation took place between the magistrates, the coroner and Mr. Noel as to the course which it might be expedient to take with respect to the confession of the prisoner Hunt, who was then brought in. He was now clean-shaven and appeared very little disconcerted by his perilous situation. The coroner addressed him at some length and concluded his remarks by saying, "I am now ready to hear anything you have to say respecting the death of William Weare," to which the prisoner replied: "Thank you, gentlemen. I am ready to answer you any question." He then made a long and rather inconsequent

statement, of which I give the main facts below, in a cool and collected manner, sometimes heaving a heavy sigh as he paused for it to be written down. He related with much verbiage how on Friday, October 24, he visited the Coach and Horses in Conduit Street, and John Thurtell invited him to take a walk. They walked to High Street, Marylebone, and at a jeweller's shop Thurtell observed a pair of pistols, which he purchased for £1 17s. 6d. They dined together, and then Thurtell gave him thirty shillings with which to procure a gig. He did so, and brought the vehicle to the Coach and Horses at a quarter to five, Thurtell then driving off "to pick up a gentleman." After he was gone Probert suggested that Hunt should accompany him to his cottage for a night and invited him to drive down with him, the couple leaving about six o'clock. After buying a loin of pork in Oxford Street their first stop was at the house of a Mr. Harding, a publican in the Edgware Road, where they had a glass of brandy and

timately than this so-called confession conveys is sufficiently clear to anyone who has carefully criticised the case, and it deceived no one at the time, although it certainly fixed the actual murder upon Thurtell. But the wily Hunt was reckoning without Probert, who was himself preparing a statement which should save his own neck and involve his co-conspirators in ruin.

Hunt was closely questioned and cross-examined after he had delivered himself of his fantasia of falsehood; but during the whole of it he was perfectly cool, and while everyone shuddered with horror at his dreadful narrative he betrayed not the least emotion. After the examination was over the handcuffs were put upon him, and, having very thick wrists, the process hurt him so much that he called out, as they were being screwed on by the gaoler, "Curse it! Don't torture me! Don't put me in purgatory!" and appeared very angry.

Probert was then brought handcuffed into the room,



"YOU HAVE DRIVEN YOUR HORSE VERY FAST."

water. From there they went to a Mr. Clarke's, another publican, and had two more "goes" of a similar mixture, and from there they drove on to the Artichoke, at Elstree. They remained in the gig at this stage and had several drinks brought out to them. About a quarter of a mile from this tavern Probert pulled up and said, "Hunt, you get out and wait my return." The latter did so, and in half an hour or so Probert returned and requested him to re-enter the gig. Hunt went on to say that "When we arrived at the stable Thurtell was there, and Probert asked me to take the pork to the kitchen. We all then went into the parlour, and I was introduced to Mrs. Probert. John Thurtell then called me and Probert into the garden and said, 'I have killed that — that robbed me of £300 at blind hooky.' 'Good God!' said Probert, 'John, surely you have not been guilty of this rash act?' Thurtell at once took from his pocket a very handsome gold watch and said, 'Do you believe me now? If you will go with me I will show you where he lies dead behind a hedge.'"

It will be seen that the real object of this ingenious statement was to effect a general belief in his—Hunt's—own innocence; but it had by no means the desired result. That Hunt was concerned in the crime much more in-

and the coroner said that as Hunt had made a statement he would be allowed to make any confession he might think proper to the coroner's jury; but at the same time he—the coroner—must inform him that no promise could be made or threat used on his part to elicit any information from him.

Probert: "Have you received a note I sent you by Drayton, the officer three hours ago?"

Coroner: "No."

Probert (after the note had been read): "I am ready to make a statement of what I know of the transaction."

Coroner: "You do it at your own responsibility."

Probert: "I shall speak the truth."

The handcuffs were then taken from his wrists and he proceeded to tell the coroner a great many facts which it is not necessary to particularise at this juncture. He emulated Hunt in the avidity with which he endeavoured to throw all the blame upon either of his confederates rather than himself, and painted his own share in the black transaction as lightly as he could.

After he had made his statement Mr. Noel, the solicitor, remarked that the confession of Hunt had been disproved in many important points and that he had evidently

prevaricated grossly. He stated that though Hunt had been admitted a witness for the Crown by the magistrates, yet the Court of King's Bench had the power by law, upon proof of such confession being false, to reject it, and put him upon his trial. The foreman of the jury remarked that it would be a pity if such a cold-blooded villain as Hunt escaped justice, "for in my mind he is the most guilty of all."

The coroner then delivered his charge to the jury in a very powerful address, and the twelve men, after a very brief consultation, returned a verdict of wilful murder against John Thurtell as a principal, and against Hunt and Probert as accessories before the fact. They were then committed to take their trials at the next assizes for the county of Hertford, and they were conveyed to that town and lodged in the gaol there. After this, Thomas Thurtell was summoned to the room and his handcuffs removed. The coroner said to him: "I must congratulate you that



Asked if they had lost anything.

you are not inculpated in the dreadful transaction which has alarmed the whole country." Thurtell replied, when he had subdued his agitation, "It was a horrible transaction; but I thank God I had not the remotest idea of the dreadful intentions of my brother or that the murder was committed, till it was communicated to me after my apprehension." The county magistrates then informed him that they must commit him to the county gaol, upon a warrant brought from London on a charge of conspiring to set fire to some premises in Watling Street. He declared that he had had no share in that offence. "My brother," he hammered out, "forged my acceptance to bills to the amount of £600, only eight months ago, and I had to pay the money to save his life."

William Weare was buried in Elstree Churchyard between eleven and twelve o'clock at night after the finding of the coroner's jury. It was a strange and awe-inspiring scene. The coffin was borne on the shoulders of six men; the brother of the deceased and nine of the jurors attended as mourners; several persons carried lanterns before and on either side of the coffin; and in this order the funeral train, followed by a large but respectful crowd, proceeded up Elstree Hill towards the church, which is about a

quarter of a mile away from the house at which the inquest was held. The Reverend Mr. Addon conducted the melancholy ceremony. As the coffin was being lowered into the grave, the rope which was placed round the foot gave way, and that part of the coffin fell suddenly to the bottom of the grave, while the head, being sustained by the other rope, rested against the side of the grave, so that the coffin stood nearly upright. This accident created a temporary confusion; but the sexton immediately descended into the cavity, and soon brought the coffin level with the earth in the grave, which was about twelve feet in depth. The scene which presented itself was one which could never pass from the recollection of those who witnessed it. The unusual hour of interment, the horrible and extraordinary manner in which the dead man had lost his life, the solemn stillness of the October night, for the wind which had been loud and boisterous during the day had now fallen, and did not even shake the branches of the high trees with which the churchyard was then, and is now, surrounded, the impressive nature of the beautiful and affecting service for the dead—all these circumstances produced a lasting effect upon the beholders and struck the imagination with a feeling of awe. Miss Ray, the *chère amie* of Lord Sandwich—she was murdered by the clergyman, Hackman, while leaving the Opera—is buried close beside the nameless grave of Thurtell's victim.

From the grave one can see the very spot where he was killed, and picture to oneself the whole disgraceful deed, and imagine the fearful scene again. And what of the chief actor in this lurid drama of real life all this time? John Thurtell, having been fully committed by the magistrates at Hertford on the charge of murder, it was not thought necessary to bring him up before the coroner, and he, too, was sent to Hertford Gaol. The visiting magistrates ordered the three prisoners to be kept in entirely separate cells, and that they should be double-ironed. The arrangement of cells was discussed in the presence of Hunt and Probert immediately they arrived, and the former entreated that he might not be kept in solitary confinement. "Why should you fear being alone?" was asked. The reply was evasive, Hunt only observing that he should greatly prefer the company of two other persons. Although it was determined that the prisoners should be kept apart from one another, it was nevertheless arranged that two men should sit up with each, and Hunt's desire was thus complied with.

The most extraordinary interest was revealed in the case during the interval which elapsed before the trial, and the newspapers of the time were hardly discreet in their allusions to the case, as they treated the prisoners as being guilty long before a jury had convicted them. Tales to the discredit of Thurtell were circulated wholesale, and universally believed in. All kinds of odious crimes were attributed to him, and he was generally painted in even blacker colours than he, bad as he indubitably was, deserved.

At the Surrey Theatre, on Monday, November 17, 1824, was actually produced a melodrama, entitled "The Gamblers," which was nothing more nor less than a lurid and blood-curdling *réchauffé* of the murder of Weare. The identical horse and gig were exhibited in one of the acts, and the whole affair was such a flagrant attempt at prejudicing a case that the family of Thurtell took the matter up and made formal application on November 19 "for a criminal information against the proprietor of the theatre and the printer on account of an indecent and unlawful excitation of the public mind, by representing in a dramatic form on the stage, a tragedy founded upon the supposed incidents of the late dreadful murder." As a result of this action, the licence for the play was temporarily withdrawn. Prior to the trial the body of Weare was disinterred to enable a witness, who thought he saw him on the evening of October 24, to identify the body if the state of it, after its two immersions, permitted. Unusually rapid decomposition, occasioned it was supposed

by the water in which the corpse had been hurled, rendered the trial which had been undergone utterly useless. Identification was now impossible.

The trial was to commence on December 6, and the most extraordinary interest was manifested in the proceedings and the utmost exertions made in order to procure a seat, or even standing room, in the court.

Much stress had been laid from the first on the impropriety of holding out to Hunt any hopes of his being admitted as King's evidence, for, under that assurance his confession, which certainly led to the discovery of the body of Weare, was presumed to have been made. The presumption that any such assurance had been given to him was, however, incorrect, the magistrates having, as we have already shown, taken his confession, subject to the opinions of higher authorities as to what benefit he was entitled to receive therefrom. But even had the magistrates received his statement under every assurance of protection, he had forfeited all claim to the benefit he was entitled to from such promises by the hollow, deceptive, and imperfect nature of his communication. Still, the day of trial approached, and nothing had transpired indicative of any intention of altering the arrangement supposed to exist, by which Hunt's evidence would be received against his accomplices. It was ultimately decided that Probert should be admitted as King's evidence, and that Hunt should be put on his trial as the accomplice of Thurtell. The reasons which led to this decision were: First, the comparative degree of guilt of the respective prisoners, and consequent value of their testimony, so many circumstances having occurred to show that Hunt's previous knowledge of and share in the murder were much greater than he had admitted; and secondly, the impossibility of the Crown availing itself of the evidence of Mrs. Probert in a case in which her own husband was one of the accused persons. Probert remained in entire ignorance of the important change made in his situation until the very moment that he was summoned by Mr. Wilson, the gaoler, to appear before the Grand Jury as a witness. For a moment, he seemed electrified with astonishment; but when the attendants began to divest him of his fetters, he gave way to the most unbounded joy. Thurtell, when he heard the news, expressed much surprise; and still more when he was informed that Hunt would be put to trial with him as an accessory before the fact. Hunt himself displayed the utmost indignation on receiving the intelligence, and declared that he would not believe it until he found himself upon his trial. Mr. Harmer, his solicitor, was almost equally wrathful; yet it is difficult to see what other course could be pursued if proper justice was to be done. About nine o'clock in the evening a true bill was found by the Grand Jury against Thurtell and Hunt.

Before daylight on the morning of December 5 the approaches to Hertford in all directions were crowded with carriages and horsemen, many coming from all parts of town, and others from the villages of the neighbourhood, in which many had remained the previous night. Hertford resembled a huge fair-ground or market-place, or the High Street, Epsom, on the day of days! The officers appointed to attend at the doors of the Courthouse were ordered to be at their posts at 6 a.m., but long before that time persons, both male and female, had begun to assemble at the different entrances and to evince great anxiety to be admitted. As the morning advanced the crowds greatly increased, and became exceedingly clamorous. Some actually forced their way in, and when the doors were opened the court almost immediately filled. It became necessary subsequently to remove those individuals who had improperly obtruded themselves in places set apart for the accommodation of more important personages. A great number of the sporting fraternity were down, and the dreaded name of "Thurtell" was on every tongue. The hour appointed for conducting the prisoners from the prison to the court was half-past seven, and shortly before this time a posse of constables arrived at the gaol, and

stationed themselves within the walls. At a quarter-past seven Thurtell, who had been previously carefully shaved, was brought from his cell. The governor begged, as a personal favour, that he would not address any hostile remarks to either Hunt or Probert if and when he saw them, and the prisoner readily consented not to speak to them at all. He was then conducted to a carriage, which was drawn up to the gate, and took his seat on the farther side. He carried a small bundle of papers. Although his legs were heavily-ironed, he showed grace and agility in mounting the steps of the conveyance, and seemed in capital health and spirits. Towards the curious crowd gaping at him half in admiration and half in fear he threw a glance of the utmost scorn.

Hunt was next brought forth. He was accompanied by Mr. Harmer, the solicitor, who had been with him for some time. He took the box-seat, and an officer placed himself by his side. He seemed anxious and dis-



"Don't put me in purgatory!"

turbed. The carriage was driven off at a great pace towards the court, followed by a body of javelin-men. The moment the prisoners arrived, the iron gates at the back of the building were thrown open, and Thurtell alighted, being immediately conducted to the "pound," which was behind the dock. Hunt followed, and Thurtell transfixed him with a stern gaze; but the informer did not direct his downcast eyes towards him, and neither of them uttered a word. Probert then appeared, and took a chair near Hunt. He appeared to be much agitated, and avoided the basilisk glance of the terrible Thurtell. A waiter just then arrived with coffee and toast for the prisoners. Thurtell, on seeing him approach, called to him in an authoritative tone, and said, "Bear a hand; let me have some of that." He helped himself to two cups of coffee and a large slice of toast, being supplied before the others, and seemed to enjoy this apparent acknowledgment of his supremacy and greater importance. He smiled boastfully as Hunt and Probert humbly helped themselves and partook of the light meal.

At half-past seven o'clock the persons provided with tickets took their respective places. In the magistrates' box were the then Earl Cowper, the Marquis of Salisbury—father of the late statesman—and Lord Duncannon. At

eight o'clock Mr. Justice Park took his seat upon the bench, and a few minutes after the three prisoners—for Probert had not yet been formally acquitted—entered the dock, which became in an instant the cynosure of all eyes. Hunt came first, Thurtell second, and Probert last, the former taking up a position on the right hand, Probert in the centre, and Thurtell on the left extremity of the dock. Each bowed respectfully to the Court. Hunt's manner, though most decorous, was palpably assumed. His features were composed; but the eyes roved about the court at will, and he seemed to have screwed his courage together by a tremendous effort of will. He was dressed in neat black, with a white cravat, and his face was freshly shaved. Occasionally he moved his right hand over his eyes, as if he were suffering from a headache.

Probert showed genuine horror at the awful character of the scene before him and a full sense of his position. Care and confinement, if not conscience, had worked their will upon him, and his countenance exhibited their haggard effects. He was dressed in a black coat and waistcoat, blue pantaloons, and white cravat. His hair was much greyer than it was at the time of his apprehension.

John Thurtell—who, after the first general scrutiny, sustained the concentrated gaze of the auditory—looked firm, determined and perfectly at ease. His temperament, like his constitution, was of iron. His features looked comely rather than otherwise, and "Oh, what a fine figure of a man!" was quite a general comment. He displayed much interest in all that was going on around him, and frequently interrogated the gaolers in a whisper as to who was "that gentleman there?" and so forth. He instantly spotted his solicitor, Mr. Jay, in the well of the court, and sent a note to him, which brought that gentleman to his side in the dock for a few moments. He was handsomely dressed, was Thurtell, and his whole demeanour that of a man about to make a great fight with the law for that most valuable of assets to such a man, his life. All three prisoners formally pleaded not guilty, Thurtell's voice as he uttered the words, being the clearest and firmest of the three. A motion for postponing the trial—urged by a Mr. Andrews, on the ground that the case had been pre-judged in the public prints—was granted, and an adjournment to the 6th of January was arranged for by the learned judge, who uttered some strong comments on the conduct of the journals of the time. The prisoners were driven back to the gaol and placed in their former apartments, where they were visited by their solicitors.

The actual trial, one of the most sensational of the last century, commenced on Tuesday, the 6th of January, 1824. The town of Hertford was infinitely more crowded than on the former occasion, when the prisoners were put to the bar. Among others who were in attendance was Mr. Probert, the livery-man, who drove down in the identical chaise in which Thurtell had driven Weare to Gill's Hill Lane—the horse being likewise the same animal. During the previous evening the counsel engaged in the case also arrived, namely:

For the Crown, Messrs. Gurney, Bolland, and Brodrick.
For Thurtell, Messrs. Chitty and Andrews.
For Probert, Messrs. Williams and Phillips.
For Hunt, Mr. Thesiger.

On the bench were many distinguished persons, including Lord Errol, Lord Verulam, Lord Essex, and Captain Fitzclarence. Mr. Justice Park again presided.

In an old volume which deals at some length with this trial occurs the following passage in reference to the exertions of the Press to properly report the proceedings, which reads rather oddly at the present day: "Every evening paper had its reporters down, and, to facilitate the publication of the proceedings on the same day, each had engaged from four to six horses, which were employed in carrying expresses. The morning papers also had their expresses for carrying up their reports at a later hour in the evening, and it was calculated that there were not less than one hundred horses placed upon the road for this purpose. . . ."

The prisoners now appeared in the dock. Mr. Gurney rose and said that as it was not intended on the part of the prosecution to offer evidence against the prisoner Probert, who stood charged in the indictment as being an accessory before the fact, he was willing that the jury should record a verdict of "Not Guilty" as regarded him. This verdict was then recorded, and Probert having made a low obeisance to the court, was removed into an adjoining room and detained there. Thurtell hardly looked so well as on the last occasion, and was paler; but he appeared as determined as ever, and showed astonishing self-possession. Hunt looked shabbier and more depressed.

Thurtell, it may be stated, strongly objected to two of the jury, as did the prosecution, and eventually the twelve elected to try the case consisted of:

Thomas Brown, of Wynyard, foreman.
Thomas Buck, of Bishop's Stortford.
Reginald Jennings, of Bishop's Stortford.
Richard Prior, of Bishop's Stortford.
George Starke, of Bishop's Stortford.
Charles Fox, of Hitchin.
John Russell, of Hitchin.
Thomas Chakley, of Stevenage.
William Foldby, of Stevenage.
John Hopewell, of Chipping Barnet.
Samuel Pritchard, of Bramfield.
William Kimpton, of Barkway.

Mr. Gurney rose to address the jury, both prisoners—and especially Thurtell—following his remarks very intensely. There is no need to run through his elaborate speech at any length; but it was a clever and closely-reasoned argument and told the story with dramatic thoroughness. One fact which will be new to my readers was revealed by his speech. It was that a watch was seen in the possession of Thurtell which undoubtedly had belonged to Mr. Weare; after the former had been arrested, and Hunt had made his statement, an officer inquired of Thurtell what he had done with the watch. "Oh," Thurtell had replied, "when I was taken into custody I put my hand behind me and chucked it away." He also, when further questioned, remarked, that "other persons, near the spot, were concerned in it, whom he forbore to mention."

Mr. Gurney concluded by saying, "As to Thurtell, the evidence, I believe, will clearly prove him to have been the perpetrator of the murder; and, with respect to Hunt, it was equally clear that he was an accessory before the fact. In the review of this mass of evidence, if any doubts should arise in your minds, you will, as you are bound in conscience to do, give the prisoners the benefit of them; but if the case shall be established clearly and satisfactorily, you will find that verdict which the well-being of society and the demands of justice require."

After the conclusion of Mr. Gurney's lucid address, the judge withdrew for a few moments, and Thurtell ate a sandwich provided him by Mr. Wilson, the governor of the prison. He then looked steadfastly at the door through which the witnesses were about to enter the court.

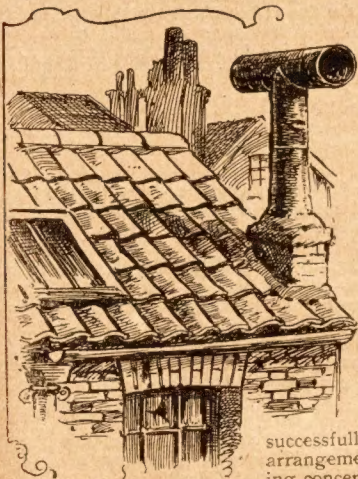
John Beeson was the first witness, and was examined by Mr. Bolland. He was one of those who accompanied the Bow Street officers in search of the body, which was found in the Hill Slough pond, near Elstree. The pond was a quarter of a mile from that place, and was on the right-hand side of the road coming from Elstree towards Radlett. The roads all about there were very bad and narrow, and a person might easily lose his way. The sack containing the body was found nearly in the centre of the pond. Two men could have swung the body in; but one could not have done it. The pond was about as large as the table in the court.

Robert Field, landlord of the Artichoke, stated that the body was brought to his house. It was shown to Mr. Rexworthy, who identified it as that of Weare.



Life of Charles Peace.

CHAPTER VI.



HE ill-fated weaver who had succumbed to the injuries received in the mill in which he worked was a man of steady habits, an excellent husband and father, and altogether a worthy member of society. He was, in consequence, greatly respected in the town. A committee of influential persons was formed for the purpose of carrying out successfully all the necessary arrangements for the forthcoming concert.

Peace, who was to a certain extent popular with a section of the operatives, was introduced to Mr. Knight, the musical director of the proposed entertainment. At the final interview a discussion took place as to the part he was to play on the eventful evening. He tried over several difficult pieces with the pianist, who professed himself well satisfied with the burglar's ability.

"I see you have paid some attention to chamber or classic music as well as sacred," observed Mr. Knight.

"I commenced with sacred," returned Peace, "and always took great delight in both, but at the same time it doesn't go down with the multitude so well as livelier strains, such as ballads, music-hall songs, and nigger melodies."

"We are most of us aware of that," observed the director and pianist, "and hence it is that we purpose dividing the entertainment into two or three parts. The first will be devoted to the better class of music, both sacred and secular; the next will be a mixed entertainment, consisting of varieties of various descriptions. You can, of course, appear in one or both parts. The first we shall have no difficulty in arranging. Your assistance will be required in several pieces which I may say are of exceptional beauty, and will require very careful rendering. We must have a few rehearsals before appearing in public. Can you find time to attend these?"

"I will make it my business to do so."

"Good. And now, as to the second part, Mr. Peace?"

"I leave it to your better judgment, sir."

"Nay, I think you are the best qualified to determine as to that," returned his companion courteously.

"If I might suggest, then," said Peace, "I will come on as a nigger, give a sort of medley on the violin, and finish up by performing on one string only. I have been tolerably successful in this, and find it generally pleases the people."

"I've no doubt it does. We've got a young gentleman—a volunteer—who is well up in nigger melodies. Would you like him to assist you in this part of the performance?"

"Yes, most certainly. He will black his face, I suppose?"

"Oh, most willingly; nothing would please him better. I will introduce you to him, and there will be but little difficulty, I think, about the matter. You can consult together."

The preliminaries being satisfactorily settled, nothing remained but the rehearsals.

These Peace attended with unvarying punctuality, and the several performers got tolerably perfect before the night on which they were to appear.

A large building—one of the parish school-rooms, which was frequently made use of as a lecture hall—was placed at the disposal of the managing committee.

Bills containing a programme of the performance were posted all over the town, and on these the name of Charles Peace figured as the "Modern Paganini," who would, by special desire, perform on one string only, after the manner of his great predecessor.

Little did those who purchased tickets for the concert imagine that they were about to listen to the performance of one of the greatest and most notorious burglars of modern times.

When the doors were opened at the school-room in which the entertainment was to take place, crowds of persons rushed forward to obtain seats. The area was filled in an incredibly short space of time.

By the time the performance commenced the whole place was full from floor to roof.

Bessie Dalton, in company with Mrs. Bristow, the wife of an artisan residing in the parlours of the house in which Peace lived, had taken up her station at the entrance some half an hour or more before the public were admitted.

Bessie and Mrs. Bristow therefore contrived to get a tolerably good position in the fourth row of the area.

A young man, evidently moving in a superior class to themselves, had been of essential service to the two females in protecting them from the pressure of the crowd during their progress towards the entrance.

He took a seat beside them.

After waiting patiently for some considerable time, the audience began to be restive.

Many began to hammer on the boards with their feet, while others clapped their hands.

"Hush! silence! order!" exclaimed several voices.

"What are they making a noise for?" inquired Bessie of the gentleman by her side.

"Oh, it is time the performance commenced," he answered, "and the people are getting impatient. They ought not to do so, seeing that the performers give their services gratuitously; and that, moreover, many of them are novices, and, perhaps, appear publicly this evening for the first time."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Bristow. "People are so inconsiderate—so unreasonable."

These were stereotyped phrases which the speaker was accustomed to make use of on every occasion.

The gentleman merely nodded his acquiescence to the proposition.

A burst of applause announced the appearance of a young man on the platform, who proceeded in a most deliberate manner to place the piano in a better position. When this had been done, he placed some music on the instrument, and drew forth a small music-stand, which he furnished in a similar manner.

Having completed these arrangements he retired.

A titter was heard in the house as he left.

Mr. Knight now came forward.

He was well known to most of those present, and, as a natural consequence, he was loudly cheered.

He bowed, and then sat down to the piano.

He played a difficult piece by Mendelssohn in a masterly manner. It was too long to encore, so they contented themselves with applauding it.

The performer still retained his position at the instrument.

A group of choristers entered. These were composed of boys and adults.

They sang a selection from the "Messiah" in a way which appeared to give great satisfaction, some portions of it being encored.

Two other performers now made their appearance, the first being Charles Peace, the other a tall gentleman, whose name was not announced; he, however, bore in his hands a bass viol.

Two chairs were brought forward in close proximity to the piano, and on these the musicians sat.

After the usual formula of scraping and twanging the strings, one of Beethoven's magnificent symphonies was attacked—to use a newspaper phrase.

It was played with great feeling, being, in fact, a gem to those who could appreciate first-class music.

It was redemanded.

"That was well played, was it not, sir?" said Bessie to the gentleman.

"Oh, dear, yes; highly creditable to all three of the performers—exceedingly good!"

While this had been going on, Peace appeared to be a little disconcerted. Despite the encore, he arose from his seat, and was about to make a precipitate retreat; but Mr. Knight signified by a movement of his hand and head that

the symphony was to be repeated. Notwithstanding this, Peace still hesitated.

At length he returned to his seat.

Many persons attributed his manner to timidity, and the tender-hearted gave him a vociferous round of applause by way of encouragement.

They were, however, quite mistaken in their surmise.

Timidity was not one of Peace's characteristics.

There was another and more potent reason for his trepidation.

It was this.

In one of the side boxes sat an elderly gentleman and a young lady.

The features of the last-named were familiar to the violinist.

She was the beautiful and ravishing creature whom he had seen slumbering at the millionaire's house on the night of the burglary.

She was within a few paces of him, being in one of the lower boxes, and she looked the very personification of female loveliness.

Peace was bewildered. He did play his part in the symphony, and he played it well, but it was a desperate struggle to get through it. Any other man placed in a similar position must certainly have broken down.

And, as it was, Peace was very nearly doing so.

He would have given anything he was possessed of to have been spared this trial, for most assuredly it was the greatest he had as yet experienced.

He had in a measure recovered his confidence when the symphony was given for the second time; nevertheless, he kept casting furtive glances in the direction of the box in which the young lady was seated.

The performers bowed and retired.

In the second part of the performance Peace made a still greater impression on the audience, who applauded him to the very echo.

After two or three popular ballads had been sung, he and another young man came forward with their faces blacked, as a couple of nigger delineators. After some patter, in which some old jokes were given, Peace commenced a mild and meek-like prelude on the violin, his companion the while working vigorously on the concertina.

The sounds he produced from his instrument were so novel, not to say bewildering, that the house was convulsed with laughter. He imitated animals, the shriek of the railway whistle, the noise of a passing train, and a variety of other noises which were familiar to all persons present.

After which he threw aside all the strings of the instrument save one, and upon this he played, à la Paganini. Of course no one present had heard his great predecessor, and most persons took it for granted that the performance of the black gentleman before them was most wonderful. It was certainly received with greater favour than many admirably performed pieces in the earlier part of the evening.

When the two niggers left the stage there was a general clamour for their reappearance.

They returned and favoured the company by giving a few more specimens of their musical eccentricities.

The concert was universally acknowledged to be a great success. It was brought to a close by a well-known elocutionist delivering a parting address, which a local poet had written especially, as a conclusion to the evening's entertainment.

The chairman of the committee then came forward and thanked all present for their attendance.

After partaking of some of the wine and other refreshments provided for the performers by the managing committee, Peace prepared to take his departure; but he did not find it so easy to get away, there were so many persons present who sought to detain him.

In addition to his brother artists, who were by this time loquacious enough, he had to run the fire of many of the town's folk, who were very profuse in their thanks for the diligence and attention he had displayed in furthering the ends of charity. Some who had partaken pretty freely of the champagne went further, and spoke in laudatory terms of his talent.

He was, of course, greatly flattered by these encomiums; as many better men have been under similar circumstances both before and since; but he was uneasy, and desirous of beating a retreat.

There was good reason for this. The young lady whose acquaintance he made for the first time at Dudley Hill was among the throng of persons in the little room which had been placed at the disposal of the artists.

There was something so heavenly and bewitching in the

expression of the face of this fair young creature that Peace felt abashed and crestfallen in her presence. He found it impossible to meet the glance of her dark, lustrous eyes without quailing. Conscious of his own weakness in this respect, he was fearful lest it might be observed by others.

He, therefore, upon the first opportunity that presented itself, passed out of the room unobserved, and crept along the passage towards the side door, by means of which he gained the street.

Then he breathed again more freely.

He saw Bessie Dalton and Mrs. Bristow some distance ahead, in company with a gentleman, and walked on quickly, that he might overtake them; but his progress was checked by a shabby, dilapidated-looking man addressing him.

"Be your name Peace, sir?" inquired that personage.

"Maybe it is and maybe it is not. What matters it to you?"

"I've got a letter."

"Indeed! Who from?"

"I don't know the party's name, but he said I was to give it to you."

Peace snatched a dirty piece of paper from the speaker's hand, opened it, and read the following words, which were written in a miserable scrawl:

"DEAR CHARLIE,—'Cheeks' (a flash name for an accomplice) is nabbed—want to see you—am at the 'Bag o' Nails'—hard by—bearer will show you where it is—don't delay.—Yours,
"COONEY."

"Here, in this town!" muttered Peace to himself. "How can he have possibly guessed? Why, of course, my name in the bills. Curse it! I must have been mad to play in my own name!"

"Any answer, sir?" said the man, touching his forehead.

"Answer! Well, yes; I s'pose so. He wants to see me.

Where's this house—the 'Bag o' Nails'?"

"Not a quarter of a mile from here."

"Very good, then I'll go at once with you."

Peace and his dilapidated companion walked on in silence for some time; they threaded three of the dingiest and most miserable streets in the town. The locality was in consonance with the character of the tinker.

"Do you know the person who gave you that letter?" said Peace.

"I've seen him once or twice before, I think. Don't know much on him. Guv'nor does, I b'lieve."

"Umph! Has he been long in the town?"

"Came yesterday, I b'lieve."

They now arrived in front of a dirty-looking beer-shop, which was the house they were bound for. The man, who was potman to the establishment, led the way in. He passed the bar, and pointed to a room in the rear of the premises.

Peace entered. A solitary person was in the apartment. This was Cooney.

"Well," said Peace, offering his hand, "we meet once more. How goes it with you?"

"Precious bad!—jolly bad! Haven't got a stiver. Am bust up, that's how I am."

Peace took hold of one of the rickety wooden chairs, which he drew towards the fire, and sat down beside his quondam pal.

"You managed to give 'em the slip, then?" said Cooney with a chuckle. "But the old un's grabbed."

"So I've heard. It was a bad night's work altogether."

"Ay, that it was."

"How did you manage to get away?"

"I gave 'em the double," returned the tinker with a grin.

"I'll tell yer all about it another time, if so be ye're interested in a miserable bloke like me, which ain't at all likely, seeing as how yer a-keeping company with the hupper classes."

There was a tone of irony in the man's manner which jarred upon the feelings of Peace, who, however, thought it best to take no notice of it.

"We'd better have something to drink first, and then I can hear what you have to say," remarked Peace, as he touched the bell.

Glasses of grog were ordered and promptly served. Peace paid for the liquor, and gave the potman a shilling as a gratuity.

"Here's to our noble selves," said the tinker, raising his glass to his lips. "Ah! that does a cove a world o' good!"

"Well, now then, we'll proceed to business," observed Peace. "You're hard up?"

"I'm done up—bust up—and ha' been pretty nigh starving. That's how I am, and seeing as how I ain't got bite

nor sup—save what we've jest now had in—I've made so bold as to lay my case afore one who won't send me away empty-handed—leastways, not if he 'ave the means to hold a 'elping 'and to a pal vot's in distress."

"I'm in no very good position myself, but whatever I can spare you are welcome to."

"Blessed if I didn't say so! I know'd it! Vot yer can do you vill do."

"Yes; here's a quid for your immediate wants. It's all I can spare now, for I must tell you I've cut the old game—don't intend to have any more of it."

"Oh, goin' to do the respectable, eh?" said Cooney with a very low whistle. "That's yer game, is it?"

"Yes; I am at work now at my old business, and to that I intend to stick. No more night-work for me; it's a deal too risky."

"Vell, perhaps you are right. But, I say, old boy, can you spare another quid?"

"Yes, provided you leave the town and don't bother me any more."

"Oh, ye've no call to be afeard; I ain't a-goin' to stay in this here place—not if I know it."

"Good! Then here's the other."

"Thanks! You're a good fellow, Charlie, arter all; but I s'pose yer'll be glad to get shut o' me—eh?" Here the speaker winked his eye.

"Well, you see, we are on a different lay now."

"Right yer are, old man. Vell, there, I ain't a-goin' to bother yer; so make yer mind easy on that score. But the old 'un, Charlie; it's deuced hard lines wi' him."

"Ah! he's charged with murder, is he not?"

"Sartin shure he is."

"How came that about?"

"I'll tell yer. Yer see, the Badger, some years ago, cracked a crib in the country, and, as ill luck would ha' it, jest as he vos a-making off with the swag who should cross his path but the blessed old fool hisself. He'd up an' give him one for hisself. A young man as vos a-keeping company with the servant rushes forward and ketches 'old o' Gregson. Vell, there the two vere struggling like anythink on the grass plat, and Gregson couldn't get away not no how, although he tried his utmost."

"Couldn't get away?"

"No, I'm blessed if he could—leastways, that's what I've heard. Vell, vot does the Badger do but he whips out his knife, and stabs t'other chap to the heart! Then the gal comes at him, and clutches hold of his throat. He managed to shake her off, but, you see, he left a something behind—the handkerchief he wore round his neck and the knife."

"What has that to do with the affair at Oakfield House?"

"Ah! it's a deal to do wi' it, it has. You shall hear. The last part it is like a play—better nor any play, that's what it is. Yer see, as I said afore, the Badger gets clean away, a reward is offered by Guv'nment, likewise a reward by the old bloke—him as was robbed and knocked down in the passage. The bobbies set to work, the whole biling on 'em, but they never got the blind side of the old 'un. Vell, this is six year ago—ay, more than six year it is now—and a-durin' them six years the gal has had but one thought. This was to ketch the murderer of her love, and she's a-done it, Charlie. There ain't no mistake about that 'ere—she done it. The Badger, like a fool, fired a pistol at random when he were in that bedroom. The gal sees his face by the pistol's flash, and she shoots him down, that's what she does."

"Of course, we know he was shot, but I did not know who by."

"By the gal, I tell yer. She's been afore the magistrates, and has sworn to him like anythink, and she means to hang him—leastways, it won't be any fault of hers if he doesn't swing. Ah! it's all up with the Badger," said Cooney with a sigh, at the same time draining off the liquor left in his glass.

"It's a bad bisness—a precious bad bisness! There ain't no manner o' doubt on't."

"It is, indeed," returned Peace; "but it is a lesson to both of us—a lesson I hope you will profit by."

"Oh, there ain't no call for you to preach or to try and make me better nor I am! But I am sorry for the old 'un; he was always square enough with me—always."

"I tell you, Cooney, sadly and seriously, that if you don't intend to profit by the warning already given to both of us, I shall, and I advise you to follow my example."

"Oh, I'll profit by it one way or t'other! I sed as how it 'd come to this sooner or later; he was so rash, so head-strong. Didn't I always say that I liked to do business in a quiet sort o' way? Answer me that."

"I admit you 'did," said Peace in a conciliatory tone of voice. "But now we must part; I durst not stay any longer," he added, rising from his seat.

"Are yer a-goin'?"

"Yes. You don't want anything more of me?"

"No—not a morsel. I'm thankful enough for what yer have given me. But, I say, Charlie, you're a knockin' up a tidy business in the town, ain't yer?"

"Oh, no; but very middling at present. What are your movements?"

"I leave to-morrow morning. And so good-bye and good luck to yer!"

The two companions in crime shook hands and parted.

Peace, when he reached the street, walked on as fast as possible. He was greatly relieved when he lost sight of the beershop in which this interview had taken place.

He greatly regretted having had anything to do with the Badger or his jackal, Cooney. This association with others of an equally lawless character had doubtless a marked influence on his later career. He had got into trouble more than once through evil and lawless companions; hence it was that he afterwards went alone upon his predatory and nocturnal visits; and these, as it afterwards transpired, were singularly successful and lucrative.

CHAPTER VII.

While Peace was in comparative security, and enjoying immunity for his past crimes, the hours were rolling away sadly enough with Mr. Edward Gregson, alias the Bristol Badger, alias the Old 'Un. He was caught in a net from which he was not likely to escape. He was deeply impressed with this fact.

The day appointed for his trial was close at hand; the nearer it approached the more anxious, nervous, and fidgety he became. He was anxious to obtain the services of some leading barrister to conduct his defence, but he had not funds sufficient for that purpose.

His sister, who was married to a drunken, worthless fellow, was the only person who stood by him in the hour of his extreme need. She went, at his request, from one to another of the burglar's quondam associates for the purpose of raising a sum sufficient for the defence.

At Gregson's direction she waited upon Peace, who was not a little disconcerted when she presented herself at his lodging in Bradford. He, however, did more than many of the others—he gave her a few pounds.

He also spoke words of kindness to her, and expressed a hope that the verdict would be more favourable than anticipated.

And now let us return to Gregson, who had been confined in one of the model cells of Broxwill.

The little money he had with him at the time of his capture he had spent entirely upon sumptuous dinners.

Gorging himself like a boa-constrictor, he would fling his enormous frame upon the hammock-like bed, which oscillated beneath his weight, and sleep from dinner time to dinner time.

Thus did the earlier portion of his imprisonment pass pleasantly enough.

It is true that he sometimes complained of the regulation respecting the quart of malt liquor, but upon the whole behaved himself very quietly.

In fact, as he was almost invariably asleep, it could hardly have been otherwise.

But, alas! one dreadful morning he was informed that his money was all gone, and that he must for the future content himself with the prison diet.

He knew from experience what that was.

A mug of gruel and a piece of bread were brought him for his breakfast. He surveyed them with contempt, and emptied them away into the slops.

He did not care about breakfast or tea. He liked being fed once a day, like the lions in a menagerie or the bull-terriers in the mews.

His anxiety was great to see what his hot dinner was. It happened to be a soup day, and his disgust on finding that he was to dine off a little thin broth and a piece of bread defies description.

He entreated the warder, in the sweetest tones his rough voice could command, to bring him something better than that.

The warder only laughed at him.

From entreaties he passed to threats, and from threats to a savage blow with his fist, which would have annihilated the jocund official had he not parried it with the iron door,

which rang beneath the shock, and covered the brawny hand with blood.

He howled with pain and stretched himself on his bed in sully silence.

After this he became a little more tractable, contenting himself with grumbling at everything that was brought him.

His sister paid him a visit. She informed him that she had obtained some money towards paying counsel for his defence.

Upon hearing this he seemed greatly pleased; despite his recklessness and bravado, he had become sad and serious as the time for the opening of the assizes approached.

He still clung to hope, even as a drowning man might cling to a spar.

At length the day arrived on which the trial had been appointed to take place. The facts connected with the charge of murder were simple enough.

Jane Ryan, who had become by this time a sort of heroine, was the chief witness; but there were others who

next. They both swore positively to the prisoner as the same person who stabbed the young carpenter.

Eight other witnesses were examined, amongst whom were the two Messrs. Ashbrook and the policeman.

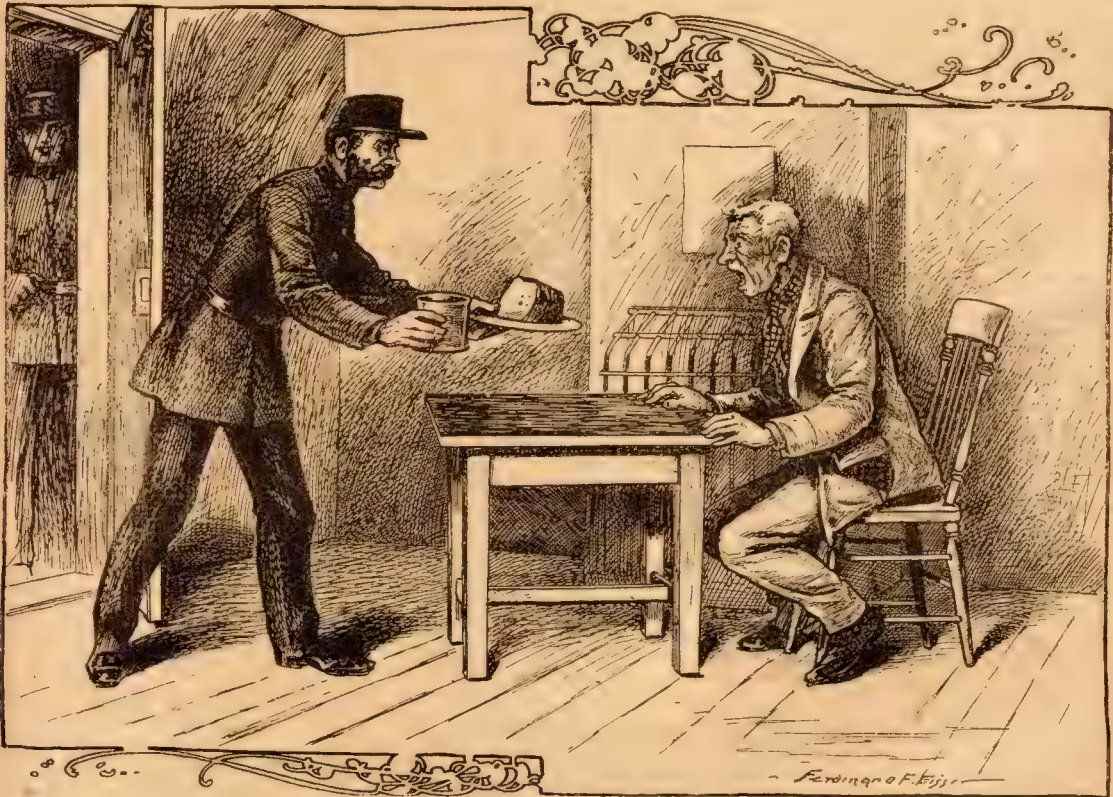
The weight of evidence was clearly against the prisoner, and, after retiring for a short time, the jury returned a verdict of "Guilty" upon the charge of wilful murder.

The judge passed sentence of death upon the prisoner in the usual form, and Gregson, who did not display the slightest emotion, was taken back to Broxwill Gaol.

Jane Ryan, who had borne up with wonderful firmness and fortitude throughout the trial, now gave way. When the sentence was passed she swooned, and was carried out of court in a state of insensibility.

* * * * *

There were but a few grains of sand remaining in Time's hour-glass for the hardened criminal, Gregson. The morn of his execution was at hand.



HE SURVEYED HIS BREAKFAST WITH CONTEMPT.

were to be called as witnesses for the Crown, who to a great extent could corroborate her evidence.

Jane, when placed in the box, was calm and self-possessed.

She swore most positively to the prisoner as being the man who stabbed James Hopgood. She averred that she had a distinct and vivid recollection of every minute circumstance attendant upon the crime committed on that fatal night.

The counsel for the defence by a series of cross-questions and innuendoes strove to throw a doubt upon her testimony.

But Jane never wavered for a moment. Her answers were clear and concise. Every word she uttered bore the impress of truth.

Her cross-examination was continued for so long a time that it became wearisome.

There was, of course, the usual wrangling between the advocates as to what was admissible as evidence.

Objections were taken to some of the questions put to the witnesses, and an appeal was made to the judge, who overruled certain objections and admitted others.

Jane's former master and her fellow-servant were the

Let us visit the street in front of Broxwill Gaol before the fatal day.

It was Sunday night, at eleven o'clock; the public-houses had closed and forced the people into the air, which was rain—into the street, which was mud.

A vast crowd was already collected before the gaol, and were watching the ominous preparations for to-morrow.

The new Act for carrying out the last dread penalty of the law within the precincts of the gaol had not as yet been passed, and the public were permitted to see the last throes of the doomed. Now, even the representatives of the Press are denied that privilege.

There were lanterns placed at intervals of several yards down the whole length of the street. Dark shadows might be seen flitting round these lights.

The harsh sound of iron striking stone rose in the air.

They were digging holes in the ground with picks and iron crowbars.

At the end of the street, at the farther extremity of the prison, there was a yard surrounded with iron spikes.

The door of this yard was open, lights trembled in its mysterious depths.

A group of men and women stood near it; a policeman was stationed at each side of the door.

Occasionally men carrying large iron bars and wooden posts passed out. These, planted in the ground, were formed into a barrier that the mob might be kept at a certain distance from the scene of execution.

Gradually the group in front of the yard increased into a crowd.

As at every quarter of an hour the church bell gave forth its solemn notes they clung closer together, and peered over each other's shoulders into that black space, from which indefinite sounds were raised, and which was guarded so vigilantly by its two sentinels.

They heard the noise of wheels, and cried joyfully:

"It's coming! it's coming!"

But they became silent as, drawn by three horses, a strange vehicle passed them.

It was a large square cart of enormous size, upon four low, broad wheels. It was painted black.

It passed slowly up the street, and halted before a small door which opened from the prison into the street.

From the interior of the prison sprang three men in their shirt-sleeves. They dragged with them a huge pole, and erected it towards heaven.

A low murmur ran through the crowd. This was a portion of the gallows.

How strange and absorbing is the interest of every class in all that pertains to death!

Many of those assembled round Broxwill Gaol remained there all night. These were, of course, the "roughs."

But it must not be for a moment supposed that the interest was confined to them.

Numbers of persons belonging to the middle and upper classes had engaged seats at windows of those houses commanding a good view of the scaffold.

As the night wore on the throng of persons diminished in numbers. There were, however, many around the apparatus of death when the first few streaks of dawn were visible in the horizon.

In an hour or so after this people debouched from all quarters of the town, hurrying on towards the fatal spot.

As the minutes flew by the multitude increased.

The salesmen of hot potatoes, coffee, pies, and other delicacies were threading their way through the crowd.

Some loud-voiced fellows began to cry out the last dying speech and confession of the notorious murderer, Gregson, better known as the Bristol Badger. They recited some doggerel lines as they took their way along, which persons of a powerful imagination might suppose to be the production of the wretched man who was about to die.

The windows of the houses commanding a view of the ghastly scene now began to fill with people.

In them, too, many of the fair sex were to be seen.

The crowd before the scaffold became denser; people, as is usual on occasions of this description, push and elbow each other. An English crowd is bound to do this.

The hours passed on. It was nearly eight o'clock.

A man in a sable suit, bent form, and a feeble step, made for the door of one of the houses opposite to the gaol. He wore green spectacles, and to all appearance was a cripple, with a false arm. He passed through the doorway, and in a few moments after this had taken up his position at one of the front windows of the second floor of the house he had entered.

He seemed to be a broken, afflicted creature, who was past the meridian of life. His form was bent with premature age or disease—it was not possible to say which.

This person, who was disguised so completely that his own mother would not have known him, was Charles Peace. He had come to see the last of Ned Gregson.

His make-up suggested a Dissenting minister. He seated himself by the side of a tall, thin, serious-looking person, of quiet manners and gentlemanly appearance.

The prison bell began to toll.

Then, as if by presentiment, the crowd became more orderly, the men ceased their jests, and the vendors their cries.

"It is nearly time for the carrying out the final act of the law upon the poor condemned wretch," said the tall gentleman to Peace. "What must be his feelings now!"

"Ah, sir! the thought is terrible. It is painful to dwell upon. What, indeed, must be his feelings?"

Here he heaved a profound sigh.

"I have never attended an execution," remarked the other, "and now my heart begins to fail me. I wish I had kept away. And you—?"

"I, like yourself, have never witnessed a scene of this nature, but, having come, I shall endeavour to fortify myself as I best can."

"I am not an advocate for the abolition of the punishment of death," remarked Peace's tall companion. "I frankly own that I do not believe it can with safety be done away with."

"Most assuredly not," returned Peace, in the mildest tone of voice. "In the interests of society it is requisite that the guilty should not escape punishment. The murderer is unworthy of sympathy from his fellow-man."

"I am quite of your opinion—indeed, I may say that you express my sentiments to the very letter."

Peace bowed, and his face wore a complacent expression, which was altogether at variance with its ordinary appearance.

His companion was evidently quite taken up with him.

"The man who is about to suffer has been convicted upon the clearest evidence of a most dastardly and cold-blooded murder. The circumstances which led to his discovery are a little singular; and, indeed, I might say romantic."

"So a neighbour of mine was saying," observed Peace. "I am not acquainted with all the particulars."

His companion gave a succinct but graphic account of all those facts with which the reader is already acquainted.

"How very singular!—how remarkable!" exclaimed Peace, adjusting his spectacles when his companion had ceased.

A short, thick-set man, with dark, piercing eyes, a close-cut grey beard, now appeared on the scaffold, at which he took a hasty glance.

This figure presented a weird-like appearance.

"There he is!" said several voices.

"Who is that?" said Peace.

"Calcraft, the hangman," answered his companion.

"Oh, indeed. What has he come for?"

"To see that the arrangements are made in a satisfactory manner. He has made one or two mistakes lately, and I think the old man is getting a little nervous."

It was quite true that Calcraft had had one or two mishaps; but these, it is said, were attributable to circumstances for which he was in no way responsible. He certainly fulfilled the duties of public executioner creditably for nearly fifty years, during which period he made use of what is known as the "short drop."

His successor, Marwood, advocated and made use of the "long drop," and many have affirmed that his mode for putting criminals to death is the more merciful of the two; but when doctors differ, who shall decide?

The name of the gibbet's victims have been legion; for until a very recent period our penal code was most severe. We have hanged not only the murderer, the ravisher, and the incendiary—not only the burglar, the highwayman, and the forger, but the sheep-stealer, the petty thief who purloined a roll of cloth or a loaf of bread from a shop-counter. If any nation ought to know how to hang, it should assuredly be the English.

We adhere to the notion that hanging is the shortest and swiftest mode of killing; and Marwood has declared that if he were condemned to death, and had to choose the mode of execution, he would certainly prefer hanging to any other.

Peace remained silent and thoughtful when Calcraft appeared on the scaffold. The latter, after a glance round, returned to the gaol.

Shortly after this the prison door opened slowly. One of the gaolers stood in the portal. There was now a cry of "hats off," and a thousand heads were bared, a thousand faces upturned. One would have believed it was a performance at the theatre they were witnessing.

Gregson appeared, bound and pinioned. This was the signal for groans and hisses, which were, however, suppressed by the more discreet and better-behaved portion of the throng.

Behind Gregson were the chaplain, with an open prayer-book in his hand, the sheriffs in their robes, the officers of the gaol, the myrmidons of the gallows.

A regiment of policemen encircled the scaffold with their truncheons drawn. A trembling ran through the crowd, which resembled the waves of the sea beneath the first blast of the north wind. This was followed by a murmur like that of the waves when the wind lashes them into wrath. The crowd became hushed and silent.

The chaplain began to read the service for the dead. The Badger looked sullenly upon the ground. Presently he raised his head and examined the faces beneath him as if there was someone whom he wished to find.

He withdrew his eyes almost reluctantly, and turned them upon the officers behind him.

At this sign the clergyman moved on one side, and Calcraft approached.

All was hushed into silence, deep and terrible as that of the tomb.

Gregson had already made one step towards his death—he now placed himself on the drop.

Calcrafft adjusted the noose around the miserable man's neck, then passed a strap round his feet and secured it with horrible deliberation. He drew a white cap over his eyes and mouth, then he disappeared beneath the gallows.

For an instant Gregson stood motionless upon his open tomb.

The eyes of Charles Peace were riveted on the form of his quondam companion.

The bolt was withrawn from below; there was a frightful crash; a black cham opened beneath the feet of the culprit, whose body swung round and vibrated in the air. Then commenced those struggles which, we are informed, are merely muscular and involuntary, but which, nevertheless, are sickening to behold.

Charles Peace was in no way moved by the appalling spectacle, albeit he acted to be overcome, and buried his face in his hands. His newly-made acquaintance, however, was visibly affected. The expression of his countenance was indicative of the most profound sorrow.

In a few minutes the crowd before the scaffold recovered from the shock.

A motionless figure dangled from the rope. It was evident enough to all the spectators that life had fled.

Gregson had paid the penalty of his crimes.

The crowd swayed to and fro; several groups of persons took their departure in various directions.

During the whole of the melancholy proceedings the pick-pockets were industriously plying their vocation.

More than one of the light-fingered gentry had been given into the custody of the police. This was a common thing at the time of public executions.

Full two-thirds of the multitude had in the space of a quarter of an hour bent their way homewards. Many, however, still remained to witness Calcraft's reappearance on the scaffold for the purpose of cutting the rope from which the body of the murderer was suspended.

Those that remained were, of course, the roughest and least sensitive of the throng.

Charles Peace, when he had seen the last of Gregson, rose from his seat and moved slowly towards the centre of the room, which was more than half filled with sightseers.

The tall gentleman who had sat by his side during the execution also rose, and prepared to take his departure.

"This is a scene when once witnessed is not easily to be forgotten," he observed to Peace. "I assume, sir, you are, like myself, but too glad it is over."

"I am, indeed, sir," answered Peace, sighing.

"You do not desire to remain longer?"

"Oh, dear me, no."

"Nor I. We will get away as speedily as may be convenient."

"By all means."

The two companions descended the stairs, and gained the street. This done, they walked side by side until they had got clear of the gaol and its ghastly surroundings.

It transpired, in the course of conversation, that Peace's companion was journeying in the same direction as our hero, who expressed himself pleased at having his company on the road.

"We have met for the first time this morning, sir," observed Peace; "allow me to express a hope that we may meet again under more auspicious circumstances."

The gentleman bowed, and said, "I hope so, I'm sure. Any way, we shall not meet again under similar circumstances, for I tell you frankly that this is the first, and it will be the last, time of my being present at such a scene."

They walked on for some little distance farther, and came within sight of a roadside inn, with seats and alcoves in its front.

"I think a little cold brandy and water will do us both good," said Peace. "What say you?"

"As you please, I have no objection," was the ready rejoinder. "As a rule I do not take any spirits in the morning, but this is an exceptional case."

The two strolled in the grounds in front of the hostelry, and glasses were ordered and paid for by Peace.

"It is a terrible thing to see a fellow-creature put to death—terrible to even the most callous and unimpressionable.

But it is a necessity—an absolute and imperative necessity."

"I am not so well up in the subject as you are," remarked Peace, who throughout his life was always ready to moralise; "still, at the same time, I see the force of your argument."

"Well, sir, I will instance a case which came under my own knowledge. In the year 1844 I had a brother residing at Battersea, and, when in the metropolis, I was in the habit of paying him a visit once, or, indeed, sometimes twice a week. One evening I was crossing Battersea Bridge, on the left-hand side going from the Bridge Road, when all of a sudden I observed a woman on the opposite side running along with her hands to her throat, from which a stream of blood was flowing. I was, as you can readily imagine, moved to an extremity of fear at the heartrending sight. The poor creature proceeded onwards with tottering steps, and did not stop till she had reached the 'Old Swan' tavern, on the Battersea side of the bridge. This was kept at that time by a man named Goslin, who was a friend of my brother."

"And what followed?" inquired Peace.

"You shall hear, for I remember every incident in this fearful tragedy as clearly as if it had occurred but yesterday. The woman rushed in front of the bar of the 'Swan' and fell on the floor, deluging the place with her blood. Her throat was cut from ear to ear. I arrived at the tavern just in time to see her fall, and to also see her breathe her last."

"And who was her murderer?"

"A man named Dalmas. It transpired in the course of the subsequent inquiry that he had been paying attentions to the murdered woman, whose name was Macfarlane. She was a school teacher, and had half supported the odious wretch who so cruelly and remorselessly took her life."

"And the motive—jealousy, I suppose?" said Peace.

"Nothing of the sort. The ill-fated woman, Macfarlane, was engaged to be married. She wrote to Dalmas informing him of her engagement, to which he did not presume to offer any objection, neither had he any right to do so; indeed, he clearly understood that she was about to make an alliance with a gentleman which would place her in a much better position in life. Dalmas wrote a very kind letter to her, in which he requested her to meet him on the Middlesex side of Battersea Bridge that he might bid her a last farewell, declaring that he was about to return to his native country, France, but did not like to leave without bidding her goodbye." She acceded to his request, and met him at the appointed time. The wretch proceeded to carry out his fell purpose unperceived, and while behind his victim he drew a razor across her throat, and inflicted such a fearful wound that she did not survive many minutes—certainly not more than five or six. The wretch, after his barbarous act coolly walked through the turnstile on the Chelsea side, and succeeded in making his escape."

"And was never caught, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, he was; the police captured him in the course of a few days, and brought him in a four-wheeled cab to the Millman Row Police Station. Strange to say, I saw him taken there. Well, to cut a long story short, he was tried and convicted upon the clearest evidence. There was not the faintest shadow of doubt as to his guilt—indeed, he did not attempt to deny it. The murder was cold-blooded, premeditated, and brutal. Most assuredly, if any man ever deserved hanging certainly it was the wretch Dalmas, for there was not one redeeming point in the whole case. Well, sir, what do you think happened?"

"I cannot say."

"To the surprise of everybody, the fellow was respited. Why or wherefore no one could possibly tell. No one has ever been able to account for the strange caprice of the executive. I don't believe there was an attempt made to even get up a petition to spare his worthless life. I don't believe there was a single individual—certainly none that I ever heard of—who was not perfectly assured at the time that the law would be suffered to take its course. Indeed, as far as I can remember, everybody was thunderstruck upon seeing it announced in the public papers that Dalmas had been respited."

"How very extraordinary!" remarked Peace. "And what became of him?"

"Oh, he was, of course, doomed to penal servitude for his natural life. He was a chemist by profession. He was kept at the expense of the public, and the probability is that he found himself much more comfortable during his incarceration than he did when earning, or endeavouring to earn, a precarious existence outside the walls of his prison house."

"It seems hardly possible."

"I have been giving you a plain narrative of facts,"

returned the other. "and I can vouch for the truth of all you have heard fall from my lips; but this is only one of the cases I could cite to prove to you or anyone else the injudicious use made of Her Majesty's prerogatives."

"A scoundrel who would be guilty of such an atrocious crime was utterly unworthy of the clemency of the Crown," said Peace. "It seems to me most singular that mercy should be extended in such a case."

"It surprised everybody—none more than myself. I shall never forget the death of that poor creature in front of the bar of the 'Swan.' It has made so lasting an impression that we have been and still are at a loss to imagine the sympathy—the misplaced sympathy I may term it—for those who imbrue their hands in the blood of their fellow-creatures."

It was evident to Peace that the topic was a favourite one with his companion, for he gave one or two more instances of a similar nature to Dalmás's case.

mending him to their friends as a skilful and reasonable carver and gilder.

Had he chosen to do so he might have established a very good business in the town of Bradford, but the greed of gain and the spirit of adventure were for ever urging him on to commit lawless acts. Hence it was that steady industry became after a while distasteful to him.

His course of life presents us with a melancholy picture—cunning, roguery, wholesale plunder, and reckless bravado. The old adage of "once a thief always a thief" was exemplified in him.

His thin, firmly compressed lips gave one an impression of a man who, if put to it, would stick at nothing to gain his ends. There was a wolfish look about his face, his eyes appeared more like the eyes of a wild beast than of a human being; he had a good square head, and altogether looked like one who had both the head to plan and the hand to carry out any villainy on which he had set his heart.



"YOU'RE CAUGHT, MY GAOL-BIRD, THIS TIME!"

After some further discussion the two companions took their departure from the roadside inn, and walked on towards their respective destinations. When the time came for them to part company, Peace's friend gave him a card, with his name and address on the face, and said he should be glad to see him at any time he could make it convenient to call. Peace thanked him, and promised to pay an early visit. And so the two parted.

When left to himself, Peace had more time to think over the sad event of the morning. Gregson's fate made an impression on him, but it is to be regretted that this was but of a transient nature. He was too fond of adventure, too prone to wrong-doing, to allow the miserable end of his brutal and guilty associate to have any influence over his future actions. He returned to his lodging; it may be a sadder, but certainly in no way a better man.

CHAPTER VIII.

For some considerable time after the death of the Badger Peace worked regularly at his trade. Orders came in pretty freely, and as Bessie Dalton had prognosticated several gentlemen associated with him at the concert given for the benefit of the weaver's widow took great pleasure in recom-

As we have before noted, Mrs. Bristow and her husband occupied the parlours of the house in which Peace lodged. Bristow was a smith by trade; in addition to this he was a wretch, who drank horribly, treated his wife—who was a pretty little woman of decent parentage and belongings—with the greatest brutality.

Drink, it has been observed, is the curse of the British workman; the fatal propensity has led to the commission of numberless crimes.

Our courts of justice furnish us with a black catalogue of atrocities, assaults, and murders, committed by habitual and confirmed drunkards.

If the veil could be lifted and the desolate and miserable homes of the drunkard shown in all their hideous deformity, a picture would be presented which the most phlegmatic and unimpressionable would shudder to look upon.

It is a sad reflection that nothing can be done to purge the land of this terrible scourge.

Bristow had an amiable, forgiving, and patient wife. Her life, since she had been united to her drunken husband, was one of sorrow and suffering.

She had for companion, and to a certain extent this was a solace to her, Bessie Dalton, who on many occasions had

sheltered her from thöemestic storms which burst over her defenceless head.

The gentleman who had been the companion of these two women on the ening of the concert saw them to the door of their residence after the performance was over.

He took the liber of calling the next day. He was introduced to Bristo who, for a wonder, was perfectly sober, and when in t state he was a decent, well-behaved man enough.

The interview w but of brief duration; after an exchange of civiltiehe stranger took his departure. And he called several tise after this, and saw both Bessie Dalton and Mr. Bröw.

Peace, as we havalready noted, could not comport himself in a becoming anner for any great length of time.

He had been loeing about for a convenient "crib to crack." He had, to use a cant or sporting phrase, "spotted" a large arehouse which stood at the east end of the town, and ld come to the conclusion that there would be but little diculty in his effecting an entrance.

The place was lein charge of a night watchman, whose vigilant eye Peace t assured he could easily avoid.

It was his custo, at this time to wear women's boots. He had on the san pair which he made use of when he entered the millownr's house at Dudley Hill.

He was over-confident on this occasion. He, however, took the precaution to disguise himself by wearing his false arm and colouring his face, which presented the appearance of a mulatto. Hewas under the full impression, to use another sporting prase, "that he would be able to walk over the course."

The town of Badford was enveloped in a mist when Peace sallied forthupon his marauding expedition.

He did not star from his lodgings, but had been for an hour or two at a quiet, respectable coffee-shop. From this place he started upn his expedition.

There were bea few stragglers in the streets at this time. for the how was late, and most of the operatives were fast asleep their beds, save a few of the most irclaimable, who w in the parlours or skittle-grounds of the public-houses

In the course about twenty minutes, Peace arrived at the warehouse wh he had chosen as the scene of his operations.

He glanced lvely around. Not a solitary passenger was in sight.

The warehouse stood in a part of the town where few chance pedestriwere to be seen even in the busiest part of the day. Nthere were none, and the burglar therefore had it all tmself.

He tried thck of one of the side doors with more than one of his leton keys, but was not at first successful in shooting bahe bolt.

He was, hoer, not a man to be easily baffled. On many occasion: has boastfully displayed to his companions his abiin tampering with locks of every description.

After someher efforts he managed to turn back the lock. This dñe gently pushed against the door, which he found wasened by a top bolt—the bottom one had evidently not ldriven home into its socket.

He had not one thing to contend with, this being the top bolt. had provided himself with a small piece of flexible steith a sort of claw at its end, wherewith to operate on. A considerable space of time elapsed before he waabled to successfully surmount this difficulty.

At length,vever, by patience and perseverance, combined with slæe contrived to send back the bolt from the socket by stöegrees. This done, he opened the door, entered, and ed it after him, so that it might not attract the notice of z of the police.

He foundmself in an enormously large apartment, which was m than a third filled with goods of various descriptions. he windows of the warehouse were covered with dust andirt, and the place was in comparative darkness.

Peace carl no dark lantern with him on this expedition; but had provided himself with a box of silent lucifers, whiwere warranted to "ignite only on the box." He struck onf these, and was about to take his way up the stairs toake an inspection of the upper portions of the building;hen, much to his surprise and chagrin, he was confronted by the night watchman, who emerged from a wooden hut in one of the corners of the warehouse.

"You audious scoundrel!" exclaimed the watchman,

springing like a panther upon Peace, in so sudden a manner that he had no time to elude the man's grasp.

"Leave go!" cried Peace, in a voice of concentrated passion; "unhand me, or it will be worse for you."

"I'm not going to part with you so easily—you're my prisoner," answered the potter, winding his fingers around the collar. "You're caught, my gaol-bird, this time, and no mistake!"

The lighted lucifer had fallen from Peace's hand upon the first assault, and the two men were struggling for the mastery in comparative darkness.

Physically speaking, the watchman was the more powerful of the two, but he had neither the skill, coolness, nor cunning of his more wary opponent. The struggle was a short but desperate one.

The burglar tried every feint and dodge to gain an advantage. By a sudden and adroit movement he tripped up the watchman, who fell on his back, his antagonist falling upon him at the same moment.

Peace lost no time in making the best use of the advantage gained; he placed his knee on the man's chest, and removed his hands from about his throat.

In another moment the burglar was sent backwards by a well-directed blow from his antagonist's clenched fist.

The watchman ran to the door, which he opened, then in a stentorian voice he shouted out:

"Help! Murder! Police! Police!"

The cries for assistance were taken up and repeated by one or more persons in the street.

Peace made for the wide open staircase, which he began to ascend rapidly.

The watchman, perceiving this, gave chase.

The burglar seeing that another struggle was imminent, and being in no way desirous of risking the chances of a second encounter, had recourse to a cunning stratagem.

He waited at the top of the first landing for his pursuer, who rushed forward, never for a moment dreaming of the reception that was in store for him.

Peace waited till the man came within reasonable distance; he then kicked out with his right leg and struck his pursuer with his foot full in the face. The latter rolled from the top of the first flight of stairs to the bottom.

Peace heard strange voices below, which he concluded, naturally enough, proceeded either from the police or a chance passenger in the street.

Feeling that he was in a critical position, and that there was now no possibility of his escaping through the door, by which he had effected an entrance into the premises, he made at once for the roof.

The warehouse was a five-storied one, and he did not pause until he had reached the topmost story.

As he had anticipated, he discovered a trap-door, by means of which he would, in all probability, be able to reach the roof of the building.

He drew some bales of goods underneath the trap, and upon these he mounted.

The door was fastened on the inside by two bolts. These he endeavoured to draw back, but they were rusty, and not easily removed.

He heard footsteps ascending the stairs; heard also voices. Every moment was now precious. If he could not succeed in drawing back the bolts, his capture was certain.

He drew a jemmy from his coat-pocket, and getting a leverage from the side of the trap, he drew back one bolt; he was enabled now to raise the trap on one side.

He sprang up from the bales of goods and contrived to pass through the opening. This done he closed it. He now found himself on the leads of a flat roof. The building was immensely high, as most structures of this nature usually are.

As far as the eye could reach the chimneys and roofs of the houses of the city lay before him like one vast panorama.

He stood on a dizzy height, from which there did not appear to be any means of escape. He began to despair, but a shuffling noise at the trap-door moved him to further action. He ran to the extreme end of the roof, and found, much to his delight, the roofs of houses, some twelve or thirteen feet below.

He looked over the parapet of the warehouses at the roof beneath him. He cast a furtive glance at the trap, which he discovered was being removed. The police were on his track.

Urged almost to desperation, he laid hold of one of the coping stones of the parapet; he threw his legs and body over, and then for a moment or so, hung in mid air.

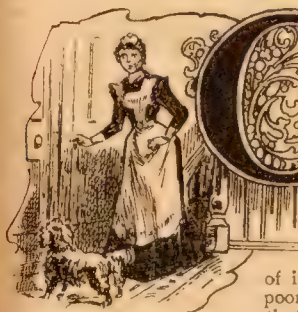
(To be continued.)

.. A .. MATRICIDAL MANIAC.

Brixton Stock- broker Murders His Mother.

"Blood hath been shed ere now, I' the olden time,
Ere humane statute purg'd the gentle weal;
Ay, and since, too, murders have been perform'd,
Too terrible for the ear."

—"MACBETH," Act III., Sc. .



Of the many crimes of which the explanation can only be found in a disordered brain, the murder of Mrs. Mary Relton by her son is one of the most noteworthy. The case was one which revealed the danger of what Forbes Winslow declares to be the commonest form of insanity—that in which the poor, demented being imagines that the whole world is in

league to destroy him, and that his sole mission on this planet is to frustrate the machinations of his phantom foes. Indeed, when one investigates the evidence adduced before the various tribunals before which Seymour Boyer Relton was arraigned, the wonder grows that he was not mercifully detained as a homicidal maniac long before the perpetration of the terrible crime of which we propose to present a brief account to our readers.

Relton, who, in the days preceding his lapse into insanity, was a stockbroker, and who at the date of the murder was twenty-six years of age, lived with his aged mother at No. 35, Spencer Road, in the very heart of Brixton villadom. There was a strange kind of existence, as we find it reflected in the testimony of the maidservant who completed the personnel of the household and of the relatives of the murderer and his victim. The mother—a lady of sixty years, and the widow of a traffic superintendent under the Great Western Railway Company—was passionately attached to her ill-fated son, whose dark, dreamy eyes, shining out of a countenance of ghastly pallor, proclaimed the lurking of the demon madness behind them. The condition of his mind was apparent to the most superficial observer, and yet—but it is an old, old story—he was permitted to go free among his fellows, to whom he was an abiding menace. Young Relton appeared to return his mother's love—the fatal affection which prompted her to have him near her when, for the community's sake, he should have been detained in a sanatorium for the mentally afflicted. Occasionally we learn there were little "tiffs" between them. But there was no bitterness in them. We gather from the depositions of witnesses that they each suspected the other of an intention to poison; but the attitude of the mother was one of pity, whilst that of the son was one of taciturn passivity. Mrs. Relton, during the later years of her life, was a confirmed invalid. All the testimony available proclaims her to have been decidedly hypochondriacal, and, therefore, surely the very worst possible kind of companion for her gloomy progeny.

In the middle of March of the year 1884, Relton began to betray signs of increasing mental disturbance. His relatives appear to have observed the change for the worse, but the old mistaken kindness left him to wander whither he willed, and to slay as many of his imaginary enemies as he would. The cunning which characterises the movements of all lunatics was ever present in the plottings of the demented young stockbroker. His glance was furtive, his step stealthy. The evidence obtainable does not decide definitely whether or not the mental trouble was caused by his business disasters or was a fatal inheritance, but the salient points of it must incline one to a belief in the hereditary theory, and cannot fail to indicate the victim as the source of its origin. Young Relton's father had been a level-headed, clear-sighted business man. The position

which he occupied when death overtook him abundantly established that fact. The pathetic querulousness of the valetudinarian mother was in strong contrast with all we are permitted to learn concerning the dead father. It would, of course, be absurd to contend that there could be no germ of insanity in a thoroughly business-like railway traffic superintendent, but the similarity of the mental aberrations of Mrs. Relton and her murderous offspring are responsible for our opinion that the matricide inherited his madness from the woman whom he so ruthlessly slew.

Somewhere about the 16th of March, 1884, Relton, without rhyme or reason, and without consulting anybody, despatched a telegram to his aunt, a Mrs. Boyer, the wife of Mr. John Boyer, a clerk to the Coopers' Company. In this missive Relton bade his dead father's sister come immediately to the bedside of his mother, whom he declared to be on the verge of death. On Mrs. Boyer's arrival she discovered that the health of her sister-in-law was normal, and the illness was a figment of an unsound mind. She was told stories by both mother and son of conspiracies to poison. Mrs. Boyer herself began to think that, after all, there might be something in the suspicions of her husband's sister. To make assurance doubly sure, she resolved to submit some suspected articles of food to analysis by the nearest chemist. It should be recorded here that when Mrs. Boyer reached No. 35, Spencer Road, young Relton took to his bed. He remained there until Tuesday, the 19th of March, sleeping little and eating nothing. For the latter abstention his delusion as to his food being habitually poisoned was responsible, and the insomnia was largely a consequence of that abstention. Once or twice Relton was seen by the servant, who apparently regarded her mistress and master as a pair of harmless lunatics, to enter his mother's bedroom, which was opposite that which he occupied on the second floor. This undismayed Abigail said that flitting between the two chambers in his nightdress with gleaming eyes and deadly pallor, he looked more like a ghost than a living human being. Yet it never entered her head to suspect him of homicidal intent. On the fatal Tuesday already named Mrs. Boyer decided to delay the analysis of the suspected food no longer. Accordingly, at half-past three in the afternoon she left her sister-in-law's house with some vegetables which even she firmly believed to have been impregnated with poison. The poisoner, of course, has a literature all to himself, and the most remarkable feature of these gruesome annals is the invariable fascination which the use of this death-dealing agency has for the human fiends who employ it. Once a poisoner always a poisoner may most truly be said of this, the most insidious, the most merciless class of criminals. They watch the progress of their victims along the way to certain death with ghoulish and mostly silent delight. This is the case even where the motive for the cowardly crime is cupidity, as, in nine cases out of ten, it is. There are instances on record in which the prospect of obtaining the possessions of the sufferer has almost been lost sight of in the pleasure yielded by observation of the effects of the poisoned potion. A kind of demoniacal joy would seem to overwhelm them as they see life gradually ebbing away.

But, be this as it may be, Mrs. Boyer determined to put her doubts to the touch. With that object she repaired to the shop of a chemist named Mortiboy—ominous patronymic—in Raiton Road, hard by the thoroughfare in which her sister-in-law and her hapless son kept house together. It would, as the horror-striking sequel proved, have been wiser to have put the stricken young stockbroker under restraint, or, at all events, to have enjoined the maid to strict surveillance of his movements in her absence. Mrs. Boyer's fears were groundless, but in the interval during which their groundlessness was established, a hideous crime was added to the long list of murders by madmen. When Mrs. Boyer left the ill-fated house, the servant was singing at her work, heedless of all that was happening around her. When that lady had been gone about a quarter of an hour, the girl heard the piteous howling of Mrs. Relton's pet poodle, and believing that the dog had been accidentally shut out of his mistress's room she went upstairs to admit him. On her way she heard hurried talking, followed by a piercing scream. Hastening her steps, she flung her mistress's bedroom door open, and a marrow-freezing spectacle met her terrified gaze. The girl does not, fortunately, appear to have betrayed the slightest fear. If she had, there might easily have been two victims of the murderous lunatic's mania. Yet the sight which greeted her startled vision was one calculated to strike terror into one of stouter and sturdier mould. Half in, half out of the bed lay all that was mortal of Mrs. Relton. Her throat was cut from ear to ear. The head of the unfortunate woman was upon the pillow, her

feet upon the floor. Her night-clothes were disordered, and saturated with blood. The evidence of the environments clearly showed that Mrs. Relton had fought as hard as a feeble old woman of three score years could fight against a furious maniac bent on slaughter.

Relton was calmly seated on the bed when the girl burst in upon him. "What have you done?" she asked of the madman, who stared vacantly at the intruder.

Relton replied quite coldly, "Your mistress has got the razor, Harriet, and she has cut her throat. I have put a towel round her neck to stop the bleeding. Now I want some help." Harriet fled from the scene of butchery, fortunate, as we have already suggested, to escape with her life. She alarmed the neighbours with the story of the maniac's matricide, and villadom shuddered with horror at the recountal. The family's medical adviser, Dr. Barraclough, was summoned immediately. He arrived only to find that Mrs. Relton had passed away to the Silent Land where maniacs are not. The whole of the arteries in the helpless old lady's throat had been severed, and her flickering life had ebbed out through the gaping wound which

mother's blood, and had hidden the garment in a soiled linen basket. The razor, which he had wiped clean, was found between the palliasses and mattress of his bed.

Relton, who appeared in nowise to realise his position, was at once removed to gaol, where he was kept under close observation by the prison doctors. The medical men discovered no trace of truculence in his demeanour. He appeared to be utterly incapable of consecutive reasoning when questioned by the specialists—a fact which is all the more remarkable when it is remembered how he acted immediately prior to the crime, and when we reflect that its commission was the consequence of the fixed delusion that his unhappy mother intended to poison him. Of the matricidal act he never spoke whilst under medical examination as to his mental responsibility. At all events the investigation had not proceeded far when the doctors decided that they had a criminal lunatic to deal with. During the coroner's inquest, the prisoner, who was present at the proceedings, stood like a man in a dream, occasionally glancing round the room at nobody and nothing in particular. His demeanour suggested a man who had accomplished the supreme pur-



"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"

extended from ear to ear. In the opinion of the doctor, Mrs. Relton had been attacked while lying in bed, and was in the act of getting upon her feet when the merciless madman drew the murderous razor across her throat. Death, he said, had been immediate, and he added that great force must have been used by the wielder of the deadly weapon with which he accomplished his purpose. He was sure that the wounds could not have been self-inflicted. When he saw Relton at the time of the murder, the wretched man was quite calm.

The police were soon upon the scene of the tragedy. The officers entering his room found the murderer lying in bed. He was requested to get up and dress, which he did with assistance. When charged with the murder of his mother, he replied, "I was looking into the fire in my mother's bedroom, when, turning round suddenly, I found my mother cutting her throat. I then put a towel round her neck to prevent the bleeding." As a matter of fact, a towel was found in the position described, but no credence was for a moment placed on the madman's version of the tragic story. After committing the matricidal murder, Relton had washed his blood-stained hands in the ewer in his own bedroom, had removed his nightdress, which was bespattered with his

pose of his life, and, having exhausted his vital energy in the effort, desired only to be let alone for the rest of his miserable existence. He repeated his preposterous story of suicide to the coroner, who, in directing the jury, collated that version with the evidence and opinion of Dr. Barraclough. The inevitable verdict, which declared Seymour Boyer Relton to be guilty of his mother's death, was returned. At the Lambeth Police Court the prisoner, after two adjournments, was committed by the stipendiary, Mr. Biron, to take his trial on the capital charge.

Arraigned at the Central Criminal Court before the late Justice Stephen, the evidence of the prison doctors who had the wretched man under observation was at once taken, the Crown being represented by Messrs. Poland and Montagu Williams. The prisoner's defence was committed to the care of Sir Edward Clarke. The medical testimony clearly proved that Relton was unsound of mind, and unable, therefore, to plead. The learned judge, after commenting upon the extremely melancholy character of the case, ordered the detention of Relton during Her Majesty's pleasure, and thus disappeared from the workaday world a maniacal matricide, to end his days in the companionship of a horde of crime-stained madmen.



CHAPTER X.

THE BOWSTRING AND EARLY METHODS OF HANGING.

WHY is a peculiar stigma attached to those who have been hanged? Why should it be more disgraceful to perish on the gallows than to meet death by the garotte or guillotine? It is impossible to say, but the fact remains that from time immemorial hanging has been considered the most ignominious form of death, unfit for any but the most abandoned criminals. "He was hanged like a dog!" What an odious ring the phrase has, and yet how common it is.

You may search history in vain to find any record of hanging dogs. Pigs have met death on the fatal tree, horses have been hanged, bulls have perished in the same ignominious fashion, but as regards dogs the annals are silent. Perhaps it is this very silence that causes the sting—his death was unworthy of record.

Still, men of mark have passed from this world beneath the gallows beam. Was not the King of Ai hanged, together with five of his captains? Did not that great diplomatist, Haman, erect a gallows of surpassing height for the benefit of his rival, Mordecai, and in the end find that he had prepared his own scaffold? Cannot we recall the names of many in this fair country of ours who suffered the most cruel of deaths at the hands of the hangman for conscience' sake? These men surely did not die the death of the dog, and, if only in justice to their memories, we should remember that it is not the death but the cause of it that brings disgrace. Still, it cannot be denied that the branch of the gallows tree has borne very foul fruit in its time.

It would be useless to search for the inventor of the gallows as a means of executing justice, for far back in the mists of antiquity we find traces of its existence, but there can be little doubt that it was first hit upon as a simple expedient for saving time. Some slave who was deputed to strangle a culprit with a bowstring found that the weight of the victim was ample to bring about death, and so hit upon the happy expedient of suspending the criminal from some branch of a tree and allowing him thus to strangle himself. This leads us to believe that simple strangulation was the parent of the Tyburn Tree, and a few words on this very primitive means of slaying the "judicially" dead may be of interest here.

To the present day in Turkey and in parts of China offenders are executed by strangulation. The sultan, quaking with apprehension in some secret chamber of the Yildiz Kiosk, sends three or four slaves to call on the noble who he fears has designs on his life or his power. The servants bear no letter from their lord, but instead carry a silken bowstring, the import of which is sufficiently known to all in the empire of Turkey. Should the noble be engaged, the slaves request to speak to him for a minute or so, and show him the present they have had entrusted to them. The rest is but a matter of moments. If the doomed Turk agrees to take his own life within a hour or so, the secret executioners keep an eye on him till he has done so, but if he shows signs of hesitation or of fear, then in an instant the fatal cord is passed round his neck, and a slave pulls on either end until life is extinct. There is something inexpressively gruesome in this semi-official execution taking place in a man's private house. We can picture the contrast between the rich Oriental colourings on the carpets and the walls, and the livid face, with its starting eyeballs, of the strangling wretch; between the choice passages from the Quran emblazoned around the apartment and the bloody fiat of the Prophet's representative on earth; between the laughter of the previous hour and the deep-drawn gasps of the unfortunate victim.

When strangled, the noble is left lying on the floor of his room, and the slaves depart without troubling to inform any

of the people of the house of the dreadful mission on which they have just been engaged. Presently, perhaps, the son of the executed man enters and finds his father. Is he overwhelmed with grief? Possibly he is a little sorry, but the character of the Turk is a puzzle to Europeans, and the only sign the successor permits to escape him of his feelings of entering into his patrimony is the muttered formula, "Kismet!"—"It is fate."

John Chinaman, on receipt of a bowstring, philosophically sets his affairs in order, and then solemnly bids farewell to his relations, and strangles himself. He has no fear of death, and possibly he has expected to die in that manner. At any rate, he is his own executioner, and would never dream of disobeying the mandate to terminate his life.

So much for the simple cord; now for hanging. The most primitive gallows is provided by nature. It is merely the branch of a tree. A rope is passed over this, one end is formed into a slip-knot and put round the neck of the condemned, and on the other some of the assistants pull till the victim is dragged off his feet and dances upon nothing. The rope is then made fast, and the doomed man left to die of slow strangulation.

Such a rude method of hanging is to-day practised in the wilder parts of America where Judge Lynch holds his courts. Usually the culprit is a nigger who has been accused of horse-stealing, or of committing assault on some white woman. He is seized by the cowboys and bound. Then he is led out on to the plain. There a court is constituted, one of the "boys" being elected judge, and a number of others filling the place of jurymen. Counsel for the prosecution and defence are also chosen from the crowd, and the evidence is heard. Sentiment plays little part in a trial before Judge Lynch, and the burning eloquence of a modern K.C. would be completely wasted. What is wanted is a clear statement of fact, and facts alone have any weight with the jurors. The proceedings last but a short time. A verdict of guilty is speedily returned, and the judge passes sentence of death. The unhappy negro is allowed a few minutes to make his peace with heaven, but anything like delay between passing sentence and carrying it out is strongly discouraged.

If there be a minister of religion in the crowd he is asked to speak to the condemned, but if there be not, and this is generally the case, then the "court" appoints some fairly steady cowboy to act as parson for the nonce. During the brief delay necessitated by this desire for the prisoner's eternal welfare, preparations are made for the execution. A long rope, or lariat, is selected, and one end of it is noosed cunningly, the other end is cast over the branch of the nearest convenient tree. Several cowboys "stand by," ready to haul on the free end when the word is given. By the way, it is generally considered necessary under the "Lynch Code" that one of the executioners shall be the judge who passed sentence, and so the office of presiding at the trial is little sought after.

Presently the judge gives the word, "Time's up," and the trembling culprit is dragged to the foot of the tree and placed beneath the branch. One of his accusers puts the noose round his neck, pulling it fairly tight, and, if he be an artist, trying to fix the knot beneath the left ear. Then a signal is given, and the cowboys pull. Up into the air goes the squirming nigger, amid the cheers of the crowd. The rope is fastened to the trunk of the tree, and the whole mob stands round to watch the victim die. As the noose tightens on his windpipe, the nigger becomes convulsed; his eyes start out of his head, and roll horribly; a thick foam oozes from his lips; his limbs are drawn up and contorted, and then shot out again with the force begotten of agony. Occasionally a ribald remark may be heard from the spectators, but generally a solemn silence is preserved as soon as the first cheering has died out. Gradually the struggles grow less, the hands twitch, the limbs remain motionless, and with a sob the spirit leaves the body. Then a placard is affixed to the tree, bearing the crime of which the culprit was guilty writ thereon, and signed with the ominous words, "Judge Lynch." The execution is over, and the crowd melts away, leaving the dangling body to the mercy of the kites and carrion crows.

Summary as the proceedings of this informal court in the Far West may seem, they are not a whit less hasty than were the assizes in Merrie England in olden times. Every baron had the power to hang a man out of hand if he was even suspected of a crime, and this power was exercised only too frequently. Any convenient tree did duty as a gallows, and speedy justice, or what passed as such, was meted out at any hour of the day. Our assizes were a little less casual. The prisoner was tried and duly sentenced at least in a properly constituted court, but there was no delay in carrying out the penalty ordered, for the wretched culprit was haled from the dock to the gibbet and incontinently hanged. Was there a

miscarriage of justice, as frequently happened in those days? Well, the judge consoled himself with the reflection that the prisoner probably would have deserved his fate later on, and so really was not hardly treated.

With the passing of the Magna Charta matters improved somewhat, every prisoner being tried by a jury. Still there was an undue haste in carrying out the sentence passed. At the very most three days were allowed to elapse between the doom being pronounced and the culprit hanged on the gibbet.

Until 1868 all inflictions of the capital penalty were public, and so we have no lack of accounts of the procedure. The most celebrated of all places of execution was, undoubtedly, Tyburn, the gallows of which stood close to where the Marble

the verses written in the condemned cell by — " the condemned, such histories being, of course, the veriest rubbish, compiled for the printer by some starving hack.

The windows of the nearest houses were filled with the rank and fashion of the time, for it was considered the proper thing to " see life " by witnessing the death of a convict. Presently there would be a shout, " Here they come ! " and through the mob would be descried a procession slowly wending its way to the scene of execution.

First came a party of javelin-men, whose successors can be seen carrying the mediæval weapons in attendance on the judge when he opens the assizes in provincial towns. Then the sheriff's coach, and carts containing those who were



THE FATAL CORD IS PASSED ROUND HIS NECK.

Arch now is. About a hundred yards to the west of the Marble Arch, affixed to the railings of Hyde Park, can be seen an iron tablet stating that Tyburn formerly occupied that site. Inside the railings is a small stone hut, a ladies' cloak-room, or something of that sort, and this unpretentious building covers the actual spot on which the famous gallows stood. The ground may almost be considered " hallowed to infamy," for it has been the scene of so many executions that were the history of all to be written a veritable library would be formed of criminal careers.

On an execution morning an enormous crowd used to gather around the Tyburn gallows, a huge triangular structure. Through the dense throngs passed hawkers selling oranges, sweetmeats, and ballads. Occasionally some really enterprising printer would supply the vendors with " The true and lawful account of the last words and confession and

doomed to die. The carts were the veriest tumbrils, without springs. In each was a coffin, on which sat the culprit, a dismal figure, carrying a huge bouquet of flowers, which had been presented to him at St. Giles's Church. Accompanying the prisoners was the chaplain, or ordinary, and the hangman was not far away. Javelin-men guarded the condemned, and a party of these old-time spearmen closed the procession.

Arrived at Tyburn, the prisoners dismounted from their carts, and the proceedings proper commenced. We will suppose that we are in Elizabethan times. Against the beam of the gallows stood a ladder. The first of the doomed advanced till he stood beneath the beam. Then he had a few words with the chaplain, and silence was proclaimed. Eager to catch every word which fell from the lips of the man who was so soon to explore the regions of the unknown, the crowd

maintained a respectful silence, and the doomed began his address. Apparently all were smitten with the same compunction, and were impelled to express themselves in almost identical words, for an examination of the last speeches of most criminals reveals a remarkable sameness in their utterance.

Nearly all commenced with the phrase, "Good people, you see me brought here to-day to die." Then would follow a brief recital of the malefactor's misdeeds, for which he invariably expressed himself penitent, even if the category did not contain the particular crime for which he was actually to suffer. Next the culprit would attribute his downfall to some particular vice. "You see what I have been brought to by —," wine, or women, or dice, or whatever the convict's particular weakness was. Having exhorted his hearers not to follow in his footsteps, the victim would next become exceedingly devout, and it is almost sickening to read the pious phrases which fell from the lips of the most hardened ruffians. They spoke of the certainty of eternal happiness being granted to them, with an assurance that is positively shocking when one comes to remember the attitude of some of the holiest men when brought face to face with death. Having rolled off the phrases which they had culled from the ministrations of the prison parson, the while the rogues had their tongues in their cheeks, and winked at those of their friends whom they could single out of the crowd, they asked for the prayers of the people. Nothing abashed, the convict, whose pride was that he was "dying game" and earning the applause of his fellows, would kneel down on the ground and repeat after the chaplain the most solemn prayers. That the wretch was thinking of something else all the time, and converting sacred sentences into nonsense, never occurred to the spectators, who would have thought poorly of the criminal who did not pray in public before he was hanged. Then the hangman came forward, and the convict kissed him effusively and presented him with some trifle as a memento. Jack Ketch speedily removed the prisoner's cravat and placed the noosed halter round his neck, and bade him follow him up the ladder. The culprit did so unassisted. When he had reached a certain height he was bidden to stop, while the hangman climbed on to the beam and tied the rope to it. During this brief delay the condemned frequently addressed a few more words to the spectators. Sometimes the executioner would now bend over and place a white nightcap on his victim's head, but the custom was by no means invariable till much later times.

Here followed the last scene. If the prisoner were a "High Toby," or really brave highwayman, he would bribe the hangman to allow him to leap from the ladder of his own accord, and when the bribe was sufficient he was permitted to do so. If not, the executioner, seated astride the beam, turned the ladder round so that the poor convict was launched into the air. From his perch the hangman watched his victim die, like some ghoul or vampire gloating over the sufferings of others. Sometimes the friends of the condemned were permitted to come beneath the beam and pull down the legs of the dangling wretch to put him out of his misery. On other occasions, when the criminal was long a-dying, Jack Ketch would nimbly drop from the cross beam on to the struggling man's shoulders, and the added weight hastened strangulation.

While number one was being finished off, number two was addressing the mob, and repeating the sickly sentiments which inspired his predecessor. In turn he took his place on the ladder and was turned off. So the gruesome game went on till the gallows tree bore all the fruit that was destined to dangle from its branches on that day. Not till an hour or so after the last had been turned off did the executioner commence to cut the bodies down, unless the sheriffs were in a hurry for dinner, when the order might be given to deliver up the bodies when the last victim had been suspended for little more than ten minutes. One by one the corpses were taken from the gallows, and either handed over to the friends for burial, the hangman claiming the clothes as his perquisite, and declaring that they would have to take their friend home naked unless a certain sum were paid him, or else were tarred and fastened into irons so that they might be hanged in public places as a warning to others inclined to robbery.

As will be seen, the only cause of death when men were hanged in this way was slow strangulation. It has been said that drowning is a pleasant death, and folks have declared that it should not be hard to die by suffocation. The writer happened to know a man who was once hanged by accident in exactly the same way as we have just described, and who was cut down when perfectly unconscious. He was an actor, and it was during the progress of a piece he was playing in that the mishap, which nearly proved fatal to him, occurred.

His experiences may decide the question as to whether slow strangulation is an easy death or not. He said:

"The instant I was turned off the ladder I felt the noose tighten about my throat, and knew that the hook in the belt round my waist, which should have supported me, had slipped. I could not call out because of the pressure on my throat. I struggled, but the people on the stage thought it was realistic acting. Every second seemed an hour. The instant the rope tightened I felt a violent pain in my eyeballs, as if someone had run a hot iron into them. Then the stage and the lights grew blood-red and dim, only to change a moment later to a brilliant green. The throbbing in my head was agonising, and between each throb seemed an age. The soles of my feet were cramped, and every now and then—it seemed as if every hour or so—an excruciating pain shot through my body and seemed to tear my heart in half. Then I could dis-



A few words to the spectators.

tinguish nothing but a green haze, across which every now and then passed flashes of lightning, while in my ears was a sound like the booming of heavy guns. My back felt red hot, and my cheeks blazed. The booming grew more rapid till it grew into a loud roar. Then the blackness came down on me, and I knew no more. I felt as if I had been hanging for an interminable time, but as a matter of fact I was cut down and restored to life in less than six minutes."

From this it is clear that hanging in olden times was far from a painless death. In our next number we will show how, with the advance of the times, improvements were made in the method of hanging, until such a pitch of excellence was arrived at that death by gallows and rope is practically synonymous with instantaneous dissolution. We shall describe the substitution of the cart for the ladder, the genesis of the drop, and the many improvements made therein, and of the different modes of placing the rope and of pinioning prisoners.



R. MICHAEL DAVITT, in the pages of his fascinating account of his experiences whilst in durance vile, tells his readers much that is interesting concerning the writings on the walls of his fellow-prisoners. Many of them elected to commit their impressions to verse, and to immortalise their sentiments in rhyme. One of these

caged songsters, a cripple, known within the walls as "Crutchy" Quin, he informs us, was a poet and critic of no mean order. This is how he inscribed his opinions on the wall of his cell:

"Millbank for thick shins and graft at the pump:
Broadmoor for all 'lags' as go off their chump:
Brixton for good toke and cocoa with fat:
Dartmoor for bad grub, but plenty of chat:
Portsmouth a blooming bad place for hard work:
Chatham on Sunday gives 4 ounces of pork:
Portland is the worst of the lot to joke in:
For 'fetching a lagging' there's no place like Woking."

It will thus be seen that Quin, who had an incurably bad habit of chastising the warders with his crutch, was a gentleman of wide and varied experience as well as a bard of commanding genius.

Among this mural minstrelsy are to be found many records of resolutions of amendment. Not the least remarkable of these is the following:

"When I get out I do intend
My future life to try and mend.
Sneaking's a game that does not pay,
You're bound to get lagged for it some day.
Written by one who knows it to his sorrow,
Who expects twelve months for it to-morrow."

Naturally, there are numerous murmurings and complaints chronicled in more or less eccentric metrical lines. Here is an example:

"One more month and out I go.
Then for a feed of hot cocoa,
Fried bread and steak, with plenty beer,
Much better luck than I get here."

This poetic dream of freedom and steak and beer galore was, we presume, realised in due time, to be followed—who knows?—by another spell of "skilly" and "toke."

Perhaps the most lachrymose of these prison poets is he who writes:

"All in a lonely cell I be:
No better I deserved.
It would make your blood run cold
To know how I was served."

Whatever we may think of this genius's chastened resignation to the fate which he admits he had richly merited, we must withhold our applause from the whining couplet which closes the rhymed growl at his custodians' expense.

Occasionally prisoners gifted with the divine afflatus grow autobiographical, as in the case of the malefactor, Jeremiah Brown, who thus versifies concerning himself:

"My name is Jeremiah Brown,
My place of birth is Canning Town,
My home is now inside the bank (Millbank),
My daily work is on the crank.
My pay is small for what I do,
My clothes are warm, but they are few;
My grub is such as makes me lank;
I shall be glad to leave the bank."

That concluding line is delightfully disingenuous. Taken all round, Jeremiah must have been a cheery soul. He was fain to confess that the remuneration for his enforced labour was not ambassadorial, but he seems to have found consolation in the fact that his apparel was fairly comfortable, if scanty. He does not appear to have been overfed. He did not wax fat, and, therefore, perhaps it was that he did not kick. But his anticipated gladness at the prospect of liberty is delicious. Really, Canning Town might well have spared a better man.

But even the comparative Mark Tapleyism of Jeremiah, whose front name would foreshadow a quite opposite personage, is outvied by one Richard Perkins, who was obviously perfectly satisfied with his quarters so long as the requirements of the inner man were ministered to. His keenest joy was apparently derived from the variety of the menu, which he celebrates in this imperishable couplet:

"Then cheer up, boys, no more of idle sorrow,
Roast beef to-day, pea-soup to-morrow."

How yearningly Perkins looked forward to that morrow with its wealth of pea-soup!

Very much otherwise was the point of view of that other bardic convict who versified his condition of mind thus:

"Lo! here, in jail,
I do bewail
My pot of ale
And 'bacca.
I cannot fail
At Fate to rail,
O pot of ale,
And 'bacca!"

Here was a gentleman who clearly had not profited by experience, and was looking forward to the period when he could resume his career of crime, and again profusely punctuate it with beer and 'bacca.

In penitential mood was he who decorated the wall of his dungeon with the inscription:

"No more jiggery-pokery
Once I leave this here chokery."

Perhaps the most philosophical evil-doer of them all was he who descended to prose, and wrote:

"What fools we fellows are! At this moment, instead of pining in dark and lonely captivity, we might at this moment be breathing the pure air and revelling in the sunshine of heaven! I am the biggest fool of you all."

Surely this is the last word on the subject.



The Late Lord Waterford.

THIS peer was quite an amateur Sherlock Holmes in his way, and was really a successful amateur thief-catcher.

It has been related of him that on one occasion his house was broken into and property of some value carried off by the robber. The marquis was informed of the event, and immediately went out in hot pursuit of the burglar. Dashing into a certain public-house, he was satisfied that he had located his man; but which of the many men present was the guilty one? He requested to be permitted to place his hand over the heart of each individual in the tavern, and the one whose heart was still beating quickly was the one who had done the recent running. Lord Waterford charged the man on this slender evidence, and ultimately secured a conviction.

Sowrey,

THE SWEETHEART
SLAYER.A Preston "Crime
of Passion."What was the
Motive?*"Love makes Heroes of some men, Cowards of others
and Fools of us all!"*

—ROCHEFOUCAULD.



VERY mysterious crime was that for which Alfred Sowrey suffered death in Lancaster Gaol, on the 1st of August, in the year 1887. The circumstances were plain and straightforward enough, and the murderer never denied his guilt; but his motive, if he had one, was never made known, and remains an enigma to this day. The murder of Annie Kelly was one of those things that—to quote Lord Dundreary—"no fellow can understand."

Here was a young couple engaged to be married, with no apparent obstacle to the union and with plenty of money, for their position in life, with which to face the world together.

Their future had been discussed and arranged, their plans fixed, and their passages to New York booked and paid for. In this case, at least, the course of true love might have been expected to run smooth. What happens? The man takes the girl to a hotel and orders dinner. During its preparation and the absence of the waitress from the room, he shoots his sweetheart dead and endeavours to take his own life. He admits when interrogated that the girl had died by his hand, and repeatedly expresses his love for her and the respect her good qualities had inspired in him, but not a word has he to say as to his reasons for purchasing a revolver and with it committing a singularly wicked murder. On the subject of motive he is dumb. Yet, in spite of all this extraordinary and unnatural behaviour, young Sowrey was perfectly sane and possessed a mind orderly and well-balanced rather than otherwise. Altogether the case was a sensational one, and no wonder that it excited a good deal of interest in Lancashire sixteen years ago. The details of the execution, the exact particulars, are known to only a few, and are of the most painful character. "I have been hanging men for three years now," remarked Berry, not usually an emotional personage, after officiating on Sowrey, "but if I had many subjects like that young man the authorities would have to find a new executioner." And he meant what he said, if looks convey anything at all to the observant eye.

Alfred Sowrey was twenty-five years old and a member of a respectable Preston family. His father had held a minor Government post for some years, and was much respected in the neighbourhood. Young Sowrey assisted his two brothers in their pawnbroking business, but latterly had fallen into somewhat loose habits, and he contemplated emigrating to America, there to indulge in the white-washing process known as "turning over a new leaf."

In the March of that year (1887) he had got acquainted with a young girl named Annie Kelly, of Irish parentage, who was just nineteen years of age. She had been employed for a year as laundry-maid at the Bull Hotel, Preston, and was generally liked and esteemed by all with whom she came in contact. Her virtue was impregnable, and if—as many suppose—young Sowrey laid siege to it, he signally failed to subdue the enemy and reduce the fortress. Miss Kelly made matrimony a condition of yielding, and it is just



SHE SAW SOWREY STANDING NEAR THE TABLE.

possible that herein lay the motive for her murder, although the fact has never been established.

It was understood by their respective friends that Sowrey and Miss Kelly were shortly to be married, and the girl wrote to that effect to her relatives in Ireland. On May 15th she left the Bull for an afternoon's outing, and, instead of returning at the stipulated hour, she remained away from her place of employment throughout the night. She did not feel it incumbent upon her to say where she had been, but there is every reason to believe that her relations with Sowrey were of a perfectly innocent character, and this he always declared. The landlady of the Bull was rather annoyed, however, at her conduct, and after a few words had passed between them Kelly declared her intention of relinquishing her employment, and added that she intended to leave England.

On Monday night, May 16th, Agnes Newell, a girl employed at the Bull Hotel, met Kelly and Sowrey together in Fishergate, and she observed that both were in a state of great distress, and that both of them had recently been crying; but neither of them offered, nor did she ask for, any explanation. On the 17th, the night before the murder, Sowrey bought a revolver and cartridges at the shop of Mr. Baines, a pawnbroker, of Church Street. The next afternoon, about three o'clock, the young couple went to the Clarendon Temperance Hotel, kept by Mr. Edward Whitlock, and were shown into the coffee-room, which had been unoccupied up to then. Sowrey ordered dinner, and Miss Whitlock left the two alone together, while she went to prepare the meal. She had not been gone from the room more than five minutes when she heard a peculiar and startling noise and immediately returned to the coffee-room. She saw Sowrey standing near the table, with a smoking revolver pointed straight before him, and his companion lying in the easy-chair, bleeding profusely from a wound in the right temple. Her cries of alarm brought to the apartment the other inmates of the house, including Mrs. Whitlock, who observed that Sowrey was now holding the pistol at his own head and making determined efforts to pull the trigger. He was unable to do so, however, and when Mrs. Whitlock screamed out, "For God's sake, don't do it!" he desisted and lowered the weapon. A doctor was summoned, but he was unable to do anything for the poor girl, who died five minutes after his arrival. Inspector Derham then put in an appearance. "Who has done this?" he asked, and Sowrey replied, "I did, and there is the revolver I did it with. I should have shot myself, but it missed fire." Derham took him into custody, and he was handed over to the Preston police. When searched there was found upon him £50 in money, seven loaded cartridges, and a letter from Kelly to her sister, referring to her journey to America. He was also in possession of two passage-tickets for New York by a White Star vessel, which, however, had sailed the previous day. It was conjectured that Sowrey had endeavoured to prevail upon the girl to accompany him to America as his wife, and that the girl refused to do so until the ceremony had actually taken place, but the murderer flatly refused to throw the least light upon the affair.

The trial came on before Mr. Justice Day, on July 15, 1887, and the prisoner now pleaded not guilty. The defence set up a rather far-fetched theory of accident, but the judge summed up against this view, and the prisoner was found guilty of wilful murder. He was removed from the court in a perfectly dazed and helpless condition.

He was to be hanged on the 1st of August, and Berry arrived the previous afternoon—a Sunday. Up till then Sowrey had contrived to exercise some control over his emotions, and had evinced a fair degree of firmness when visited by his relatives. He begged the chaplain to send a letter to the parents of his victim, conveying his remorse for the deed, and expressing his appreciation of the poor girl's many good qualities.

Monday, August 1st, 1887, was a fine, bright morning, Overnight the condemned man had seemed more easy in his mind and more resigned to his inevitable fate, but with the break of day he awoke from a sound sleep with a cry of horror, and, his courage again forsaking him, he shivered and trembled in every limb. The spasmodic and convulsive twitchings of his legs seemed absolutely uncontrollable, and even the warders, case-hardened as most of them were, gazed with awe and something like dread at the pitiful picture before them. Never had they witnessed such a fear of approaching death as this poor youth displayed.

When Berry entered the condemned cell the culprit appeared terror-stricken and turned ghastly pale. During the process of pinioning, which he resisted with all his might, he was convulsed with agitation and fear, and no

less than four warders were fully occupied in restraining him. During the procession to the scaffold he continued his violent resistance, planting his feet down firmly and endeavouring to force himself back. When this poor, lost wretch came in sight of the scaffold he uttered loud exclamations of horror, which more resembled the cries, inarticulate and incoherent, of some animal in pain. No less than five warders led or dragged him up the steps of the gallows, and Berry experienced the utmost difficulty in fixing the rope about his neck. Indeed, the hangman badly strained his arm through the extraordinary violence on the part of his "subject." Poor Sowrey! What mental agony he must have endured. I am happy to say that his physical sufferings were practically nil, for he died instantaneously.

Leaves from Our Notebook.

A Newmarket Horror.

How many people who visit Newmarket on big occasions like the "Two Thousand," the "Caesarewitch," or the "Cambridgeshire," are aware that the classic heath was once the scene of a sanguinary crime? Very few, no doubt. Yet it is a fact that early in the last century—it was 1816 or 1817—the body of a man was found near the landmark known as "The Bushes" with his throat cut and his pockets pulled out. It was shortly after the Houghton Meeting, and there had been a great rush of visitors to the "little town in Cambridgeshire," even though railway travelling was then a dream of the future.

The criminals in this case were never captured.

Too Many Cooks.

A MAN of the name of Cooke was once charged with a particularly barefaced burglary, and the case came on for trial before Mr. Justice Cresswell.

A constable who apprehended the prisoner was under examination and the counsel for the prosecution asked him, "What did the accused say when he was arrested?" It appeared that two others had been concerned with Cooke in the burglarious attempt; but they had contrived to get away.

"He said, my lord," replied the officer, "that he wished he'd done the job alone. He was sorry that his brothers were with him to mess it up."

"Humph!" remarked the judge, "a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth, eh?"

An Anecdote of Thurtell.

A GENTLEMAN making a journey by coach from London to Cambridge in the year 1822 found the monotony and tedium of the drive ameliorated by the conversation of his companion, a fine-looking young man, who said he was going to Newmarket Races.

He found his fellow-traveller a most pleasant person with a fund of information on many subjects, and no mean record, if he was to be believed, as a soldier. He so entertained the old fogey that the latter was quite sorry to part with his delightful companion and said so. "Oh, don't let that concern you," said the other, "I feel that we are sure to meet again some day, and I hope it will be under equally agreeable circumstances."

The old gentleman did see him once again, and once only. His fellow-traveller was John Thurtell, hanged for the brutal murder of Mr. Weare!



CREWE.—The story of the crime of the Brothers Davies, who murdered their father because he ill-treated their mother, appeared in Nos. 11 and 12 of FAMOUS CRIMES.

CONSTANT READER (Windsor).—Mulled Sack, whose proper name was Thomas Collett, was hanged at Tyburn in 1674. Exact date is not recorded, Captain Hand was executed for treason, and not for robbery on the road, by the order of Cromwell. He suffered at Worcester in 1651.

STONE JUG (Long Acre).—The particulars you mention are too meagre to enable us to trace the crime referred to. The only murder of a person named Green for which the criminal was hanged, was the murder of Mrs. Green by her husband at Leicester in 1876. Is this the one you want to know about?

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